

A Model Republic?
Trust and Authoritarianism on Tatarstan's Road to Autonomy

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Curriculum
of Russian and East European Studies.

Chapel Hill
2009

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ABSTRACT

NICOLE BALKIND: A Model Republic? Trust and Authoritarianism on Tatarstan's
Road to Autonomy
(Under the direction of Graeme Robertson)

Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic groups such as Tatars and Chechens began to demand independence. From the cacophony of autonomy demands, Tatarstan emerged with the highest level of autonomy of Russia's 21 ethnic republics. This thesis argues that Tatarstan negotiated a relatively high amount of independence through elite trust and regional authoritarianism. The unique position of the Tatar leadership allowed them to maximize their autonomy by being seen as an ally of Moscow, having insider experience with the Russian legal system, and using President Shaimiev's authoritarianism as a bargaining chip. The control exercised by Shaimiev's regime was used to apply pressure to the federal authorities during a period when Moscow feared the unraveling of the fragile Russian Federation. Elite trust and regional authoritarianism acted upon each other to keep the balance of incentives for both Tatarstan and Russia and were thus integral to Tatarstan's path to autonomy.

"Write your injuries in dust, your benefits in marble." Benjamin Franklin

To Brandon, who tolerates my dust and believes it will become marble.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
ATPC	All-Tatar Public Center
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DUMES	Islamic Spiritual Board of the European Part of Russia and Siberia
DUMRT	Islamic Spiritual Board of the Republic of Tatarstan
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1767, Catherine the Great wrote to her consort Voltaire, "I am in Asia! I wanted to see this country with my own eyes. In Kazan, there are twenty different peoples which are nothing like each other and I have to sew, for them, one garment to suit everyone."¹ Long has Russia been vexed by how to deal with the numerous diverse peoples who inhabit the edges of their empire. Catherine the Great's difficulty in finding a policy toward Russia's ethnic regions was also felt by the Soviet leadership and Russian Presidents since the end of the Soviet Union. The 21 ethnic republics are as diverse in their political character as they are in religion, language and appearance; creating a system of governance that is equitable and satisfactory to all has proven to be a great challenge.

As the Soviet Union unraveled, a cacophony of demands arose from Russia's ethnic regions. Moscow endeavored to negotiate different agreements as needed with each ethnic republic, oblast or krai. By the late 1990's, 47 individual agreements had been signed. Russia's foray into this unique arrangement of constituent parts, often referred to as asymmetric federalism had some unexpected results. Of the 21 ethnic republics, the level of autonomy allowed by specific agreements on autonomy, also referred to as

¹ Bukharaev, Ravil. *The Model of Tatarstan: Under President Mintimer Shaimiev*. (Richmond: Curzon, 1999), 64.

bilateral treaties, varied greatly. Tatarstan, the first republic to sign such an agreement, had been granted much more independence from Moscow than republics with similar religious, geographic and economic characteristics. As the first republic to reach an agreement with the Kremlin, this Muslim republic on the Volga became a paradigm for the other ethnic regions. The case of Tatarstan stands out as an exception because it achieved the most concessions without threats of violence or secession, which were the norm in other ethnic regions. Despite the copious amounts of research into the Tatarstan case, the question remains: how was Tatarstan able to negotiate an unprecedented level of autonomy without threats of violence or secession, while instability and violence was the expected norm in the ethnic regions of the Russian Federation.

THE EVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN FEDERALISM

During the Communist period, policies on nationality developed and unified ethnic groups through identity creation and language standardization. The most populous ethnic groups were given titular homelands under the Soviet system. When the USSR began to dissolve in the early 1990's, ethnically-based territories with well-defined borders and governing institutions already existed, making it much easier for the "parade of nationalities" to begin.

As the Soviet Union unraveled, the territories known as Union Republics became their own separate countries. These larger areas, such as Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, were on Russia's border and had most of the trappings of statehood under the Soviet system, easing their transition to independence. However, within Russia's territory, ethnically distinct regions smaller than the union republics, which did not become independent

states as the USSR fell apart. The Russian leadership, seeing the trend towards ethnic self-determination and statehood, worried that these ethnic regions would break away, leaving Russia looking like a piece of Swiss cheese.

As a solution to their "ethnicity problem," the Russian leadership began to negotiate treaties that would grant semi-autonomy to the twenty-one ethnic regions. The resulting system of complex federalism is characterized by ethnic minorities controlling have their own titular regions within Russia, enjoying varied levels of independence. In 1990s Russia, negotiations toward complex federalism created a diverse set of outcomes, of which Tatarstan arguably achieved the most autonomy of all the ethnic republics.

Tatarstan is a region located at the intersection of the Volga and Kama rivers, in the southwest region of Russia. Its capital, Kazan, was home to the Tatar-Mongol hordes who arrived in the 13th century, established the Kazan Khanate and subjugated the Russian population, often called the "Tatar-Mongol Yoke." In 1552, Tsar Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible), defeated the Kazan Khanate and absorbed the Tatar lands into Muscovy, where they have remained ever since.² Since its founding 1991, Mintimer Shaimiev has held the position of President of Tatarstan.

Tatarstan is a region vital to the economic activities of Russia, located on the Volga, a major shipping route, and the Trans-Siberian railroad. Located in the Republic are significant oil resources, along with defense, energy and manufacturing facilities which are vital to Russia as a whole.³ According to the 1989 census, the population of the

² Roza N. Musina, "Contemporary Ethnosocial and Ethnopolitical Processes in Tatarstan" In *Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Soviet World: Case Studies and Analysis*, ed. L. M. Drobizheva (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 195.

³ Ibid., 197

republic is 49% Tatar and 43% Russian.⁴ Tatarstan is the titular homeland of the Tatar ethnic group, although there is a very large diaspora, with three-quarters of Tatars living outside Tatarstan.⁵ Although the official languages are Tatar and Russian, bilingualism is common among the Tatar population: 77.2% are fluent in Russian, while only 1.1% of the Russian population is fluent in Tatar.⁶ Sunni Islam is the dominant faith, with 55% of the population reporting to be Muslim, and a 100% increase in the number of Muslims in the last 25 years.⁷

After the fall of the Soviet Union, nationalists and government elites within Tatarstan demanded an independent, Tatar homeland. Based on the histories of minority populations who demanded independence from their more powerful state, this conflict was likely to result in violence. One need not look further than the violence in Russia's other ethnic republics in the Caucasus and Tuva in Siberia observe the possible consequences of independence demands. Surprisingly, Tatarstan was able to negotiate a treaty with the Russian government without much escalation in the conflict, and was the first in a steady stream of other regions and republics who joined in the "parade of nationalities."

Tatarstan is an exemplary and unique case among the semi-autonomous regions of the Russian Federation, the only one which was able to receive certain concessions from Moscow and was able to maintain a non-adversarial relationship with the Federal leaders. Tatarstan's experience and results paved the way for subsequent agreements negotiated between ethnic republics and the Kremlin. Tatarstan is perceived as a leader

⁴ Ibid., 196

⁵ Ibid., 197

⁶ Ibid., 200

⁷ Alexey D. Krindatch, "Patterns of Religious Change in Postsoviet Russia: Major Trends from 1998 to 2003," *Religion, State & Society* 32, no. 2 (June 2004), 123.

among Russia's ethnic republics, especially in the areas of inter-ethnic relations, center-regional relations, and economic development. The experience of Tatarstan is often studied as an exemplary center-periphery interaction, and is referred to as "The Tatarstan Model," the path taken by Tatarstan down its road to autonomy, to include negotiations, referenda, and other relations with Moscow. These scholars, journalists and politicians cite various explanations of Tatarstan's exceptionalism, but most tend to disregard critical facts and miss the mark on explaining how Tatarstan achieved its unique status.

EXPLAINING THE "TATARSTAN MODEL"

In explaining Tatarstan's unique autonomy vis-a-vis other regions of the Russian Federation, history, culture, geography, demographics, economics and religion are all commonly cited components. Roza Musina, who places the emphasis on history and culture, exaggerates the amity of interethnic relations in Tatarstan, arguing that there has been no crisis in Tatar-Russian relations and making the further claim that a "high level of mutual tolerance and trust remains characteristic of interethnic relations in Tatarstan." She ignores the "Tatarization" effort made by the Shaimiev regime, a program to systematically undermine the cultures of non-Tatar residents of the republic, but acknowledges the educational, economic and ethnic disparities between rural and urban populations. Musina asserts that ethnic tolerance and trust that she perceives in Tatarstan resulted from generations of Russian-Tatar co-habitation and the Tatar predisposition to peacefulness.⁸ She says that there is a special Russian-Tatar relationship and mutual trust built on centuries of cooperation. It may be true that Russian and Tatars have a closer relationship than other ethnic populations in the Russian Federation. As Alexei

⁸ Musina, *Contemporary Ethnosocial and Ethnopolitical Processes in Tatarstan*.

Malashenko notes, Russians and Tatars have become used to living near one another, the "Russian man in the street apparently ignores the Tatar's Muslim identity: they are just neighbours that everyone has come used to."⁹ The characterization of Tatar-Russian relations as persistently peaceful is an assumption that cannot be made based on the virility of the Tatar nationalist movement. Musina concludes, based on her low estimation of the potential for Tatar nationalism and inter-ethnic strife, that these factors lowered the conflict potential and caused a peaceful resolution. The logic of this statement does not follow, because if the Tatars had no potential to have a violent opposition to Russia's actions, then Russia would not have to make any concessions. The fact that Tatarstan won more concessions than any other republic indicates that the republic had something to bargain with. Still, Musina implies that the Russian government had no reason to fear violence in Tatarstan because of the "nature of Tatars," which is a very disappointing argument from a scholar on ethnic conflict.

If one considers the possibility of ethnic favoritism playing a role in autonomy negotiations between Russia and Tatarstan, one would not expect to see a Tatar nationalist movement that was active and had political influence in the republic. If the relationship between Tatars and Russians was amicable to the extent that Musina describes, then one would also not expect to see the marginalization of Russians in Tatarstan in education, culture and politics. There was ethnic tension between rural, poor Tatars and wealthy Russian urbanites, and the government operated an active campaign of "Tatarization." In fact, leading up to the March 21, 1992 referendum, when Tatars voted on the status of Tatarstan within Russia, Valery Zorkin, Chairman of the Russian

⁹ Alexei Malashenko, "Islam, the Way we See it," *Russia in Global Affairs* 4, no. 4 (October - December 2006), 30.

Constitutional Court, anticipated "seas of blood." In the media during this period, Russian reports in the Republic used phrases such as "national separatism," "Islamic fundamentalism," "a little island of communism," and "a theocratic Bantustan." Not to be outdone, the Tatar media called Russia a "chauvinistic empire."¹⁰ The case of Tatarstan is unique because this clearly contentious situation did not escalate to violence and resulted in an amicable Kazan-Moscow relationship.

Some scholars cite the lack of credibility in the Tatar demand for autonomy as the reason for Tatarstan's ability to negotiate an unprecedented level of autonomy without violence. In *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests and the Indivisibility of Territory*, Monica Duffy Toft argues that an ethnic group must have "legitimacy" in order to achieve independence. She asserts that geographic factors of the Tatar population left the Tatar nationalist movement in a weak position, which they eventually moderated. The key factors for Toft are Tatarstan's lack of external borders and large diaspora. Toft argues that being contained entirely within Russian territory would mean an independent Tatarstan would have to rely on Russia for economic and human flows across its borders. Further, it would be in a very vulnerable position tactically, already surrounded on all sides by a potential aggressor nation. Further, Toft claims the Tatar diaspora does not give Tatarstan credibility as the homeland of the Tatar people. Together she believes that these factors would give disincentives for international support and it would be extremely difficult for Tatarstan to achieve independence.

¹⁰ Nail Midkhatovich Moukhariamov, "The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic" In *Beyond the Monolith: The Emergence of Regionalism in Post-Soviet Russia*, eds. Joan DeBardeleben, Jodi Koehn and Peter J. Stavrakis (Washington, D.C.: W. Wilson Center Press, 1997), 220, <http://search.lib.unc.edu.libproxy.lib.unc.edu?R=UNCb3084714> (accessed 4/29/2009).

The power-sharing agreement that was signed by Russia and Tatarstan in 1994 came about, according to Toft, because both Tatar and Russian demands were moderated. Tatar leaders settled for more control over their economy rather than identity or land, while Russian interests centered on precedent-setting for the other separatist and ethnic regions. Ultimately, Tatarstan's weak geographic position allowed for negotiation and an agreement. Toft argues that Tatarstan appears to have gained more sovereignty than expected, but Russia's position remained unwavering and they manipulated the Tatar independence movement by making a few concessions.¹¹

While Toft's arguments do address some key reasons why Tatarstan would not be a legitimate state, it does not follow that a low threat of Tatar secession would cause Moscow to give Tatarstan more autonomy than any other republic. One would expect to see those republics with the most legitimacy (external borders, economic viability, and concentrated ethnic population) achieve the highest levels of autonomy. Since Russia negotiated with Tatarstan regardless of their legitimacy problems, (significant diaspora, territory entirely within Russia) we can assume that Moscow took Tatarstan's autonomy demand seriously.

A possible explanation to Russia's perception that Tatarstan had legitimacy as an independent state, contrary to Toft's assessment, it was not out of the realm of possibility for Tatarstan to have an external border. Within the republic of Tatarstan, Tatars make up 49% of the population. In the adjacent republic, Bashkortostan, Tatars make up 28%, even more than Bashkirs, who are 22% of the population. Together, the population of Muslim ethnic groups in Bashkortostan is approximately 56%. The cultural and

¹¹ Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

linguistic characteristics of Tatars and Bashkirs is considered very close, such that some members of these groups identify themselves interchangeable in government censuses.¹²

Located south of Tatarstan are two Russian oblasts, Orenburg and Samara, where the Muslim population was 15.2% in 1989 and 16.8% in 2002.¹³ The southeast section of the oblast is populated by Tatars, Bashkirs and Kazakhs, while the northwest areas are populated by Tatars.¹⁴ Sharing the southern border of this oblast is Kazakhstan, whose titular ethnic group has the same linguistic roots and religious denomination as Bashkirs and Tatars. The extension of the Tatar and Bashkir populations south and the Kazakh population north creates what is called the "Orenburg Isthmus."¹⁵ In Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the Tatar and Bashkir groups together have a small majority, and therefore it is reasonable to consider the possibility of these ethnic lands being extended along the concentrated areas of Orenburg Oblast, which have more than 20% Tatar and Bashkir populations. A hypothetical "Tatar-Bashkiria" would then have an external border and would fulfill the aspirations of some nationalist groups who have been working toward this kind of pan-Islamic republic for decades. Although there is no current information to suggest that this scenario is likely; it does show that the Russian government was unlikely to discount the legitimacy of Tatarstan's autonomy demand when it was extremely sensitive to losing territory in a manner like the hypothetical "Tatar-Bashkiria."

¹² Dmitry P. Gorenburg, *Minority Ethnic Mobilization in the Russian Federation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹³ Timothy Heleniak, "Regional Distribution of the Muslim Population of Russia," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 47, no. 4 (2006), 438.

¹⁴ Kimitaka Matsuzato, "The Regional Context of Islam in Russia: Diversities Along the Volga," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 47, no. 4 (2006), 456.

¹⁵ Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*, 224.

Since there were ethno-nationalist movements and tensions in Tatarstan, and the Kremlin considered the Tatar demand for autonomy seriously, then it seems that the two were on a collision course for violence. The way in which this violence was prevented and an agreement was reached is often referred to as the "Tatarstan Model." This term was coined during Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaimiev's visit to Harvard University in 1994.¹⁶ Alexei Zverev, in "Qualified Sovereignty: The Tatarstan Model for Resolving Conflicting Loyalties," defines the Tatarstan Model as the combination of six characteristics of Tatarstan: geographic position, bi-ethnic composition, diaspora, historic relationship with Russians, oil, and Tatar national movement with the tempering presence of an experienced leader. Zverev argues that there are two main aspects of the Tatarstan Model: peaceful resolution to conflicts between republic and center and the peaceful resolution of conflicts within the republic itself. He argues that the Tatars decided the limitations of the sovereignty they could legitimately demand, resulting in "qualified sovereignty."¹⁷

While Zverev carefully considers the many aspects of the Tatarstan case, his argument is too simplified, because he does not attempt to explain how these factors affected autonomy. By combining all the political dynamics of the republic and the republic's relationship to Moscow into one category, Zverev grossly underestimates how many factors within each dynamic could have changed the outcome.

Nail Midkhatovich Moukhariamov, in "The Tatarstan Model: Situational Dynamic," has a more satisfying explanation of the "Tatarstan Model," describing it as

¹⁶ Ravil Bukharaev, *The Model of Tatarstan: Under President Mintimer Shaimiev* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999), 3.

¹⁷ Alexei Zverev, "Qualified Sovereignty: The Tatarstan Model for Resolving Conflicting Loyalties" In *Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia*, eds. Michael Waller, Bruno Coppieters and Alexei Malashenko (London: F. Cass, 1998).

three simultaneous processes. He argues that Tatar leadership successfully maneuvered the Russian legal waters to prevent legal blockage of the republic's sovereignty. At the same time, rhetoric from Tatar nationalists and Russian leaders intensified, but ultimately, elite pragmatism based on the understanding that economic cooperation would increase stability, resulted in compromise. Moukhariamov's argument explains how political dynamic facilitated compromise, but does not explain why these dynamics occurred. For example, he argues that Russian flexibility and elite pragmatism, was a key factor, but he does not address why Russians were flexible and pragmatic.¹⁸

AUTONOMY THROUGH TRUST AND AUTHORITARIANISM

This thesis aims to elaborate on the existing explanations of the Tatar-Russian autonomy compromise and outline two dynamics that complemented each other and together resulted in Tatarstan achieving the highest level of autonomy in the Russian Federation. The dynamic of trust between Russian and Tatar elites complemented the Tatar government's authoritarian control of the republic.

Trust does not yet have an accepted definition within the context of political interactions. According to Levi and Stoker in the *Annual Review of Political Science*,¹⁹ most definitions have some characteristics in common. Their survey of the literature on political trust indicates that scholars view trust as relational, pertaining to "an individual making herself vulnerable to another individual, group, or institution that has the capacity to do her harm or to betray her" and conditional, "given to specific individuals or

¹⁸ Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*

¹⁹ Margaret Levi and Laura Stoker, "Political Trust and Trustworthiness," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 3 (2000), 475-507.

institutions over specific domains."²⁰ The amount that an actor will make themselves vulnerable and the areas to which this vulnerability will apply, increase or decrease depending on the amount of trust. The criteria upon which trustworthiness is evaluated can be described as the credibility, competence and threat potential of another political actor. While most of the literature on political trust pertains to the citizenry's trust in government, Larson and Listhaug have developed definitions of trust between states and/or political elites. Larson's work highlights two levels of political trust, between state and elites. Among states, she defines trust as the ability to "rely on a state to observe treaties and to fulfill its commitments and promises."²¹ She observes that "because the amount of trust required for an agreement varies, states can overcome the barrier of mutual suspicion by starting with small agreements where less is at stake so that each state can test the other's intentions without putting too much at risk. In this way, states can acquire information about the other's values and reliability before they move on to riskier agreements."²² Closely related but distinct is Larson's treatment of trust between elites. She places the meaning of trust in three key concepts: predictability, credibility and benevolent intentions.²³ She notes that the psychological definition of trust is "reliance on one another at the risk of a bad outcome should the other cheat or renege,"²⁴ Thus, the decision to trust is made if "the probability of a good outcome outweighs the risks that her trust will have adverse consequences."²⁵ Listhaug's definition of trust emphasizes the behavior of the political actor in "accordance with normative

²⁰ Ibid., 476.

²¹ Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 20.

²² Ibid., 21.

²³ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁴ Ibid., 19.

²⁵ Ibid., 21.

expectations".²⁶ Such expectations in relations between political elites will vary based on past experiences, and can be generalized as Larson's three concepts: predictability, credibility and benevolent intentions.

This study deals with trust between elites who are acting on behalf of states when negotiating treaties. Therefore, the definition of trust will combine elements of the state-state and individual- individual definitions. In this thesis, trust will refer to the real or perceived ability to rely on an actor's adherence to agreements, non-adversarial behavior, predictability and competency. The definition in the case of Russia's bilateral treaties must encompass the state-to-state and interpersonal levels because many of the elites integral in this process had shared experiences which colored their evaluation of the trustworthiness of other elites. The legacy of membership in the communist party is inextricable from the dynamics of the republics' autonomy negotiations.

Scholars have not yet determined a commonly accepted standard by which to measure trust, but some have conducted their research around characteristics such as competence, integrity, fairness, regime type, political actors.²⁷ The cases in this thesis will be measured against the definition of trust previously mentioned, based on the real or perceived ability to rely on an actor's adherence to agreements, non-adversarial behavior, predictability and competency. The evidence will be used to demonstrate indicators of these components. For example, the adherence to agreements would be indicated by following through on prior commitments, whether they are treaties, agreements or keeping one's word at an interpersonal level. The indicators that could be used to evaluate an actor's non-adversarial behavior might include having interests similar to one's own, a

²⁶ Cited in Margaret Levi and Laura Stoker, "Political Trust and Trustworthiness," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 3 (2000), 498.

²⁷ Ibid., 496-497.

history of cooperative behavior and benevolence. For states cooperation and benevolence could be observed in the types of demands made in state-state negotiations, policies regarding borders, and sharing information, such as intelligence. On a personal level, political actors could estimate another's benevolence or willingness to cooperate based on rhetoric, demeanor, and actions. Predictability and competence are perhaps easier to judge than the previous criterion, and may be assessed, on a state or individual level as how the entity's actions are similar to the prior actions, and whether the entity acts in its own interest. Not acting according to one's own interests can be seen as being unpredictable and not competent, since it only hurts oneself.

The characteristics of trust outlined here do not all need to be present in order for trust to exist I order for there to be a trusting relationship between political actors. Each characteristic is a way to gauge the trustworthiness of another entity, and are important to different degrees depending on the strength of the other characteristics and the particular situation. For example, an autocrat who is willing to cooperate, has taken no adversarial actions and adheres to agreements may not be able to be trusted if they are wildly unpredictable ad incompetent in their state; the inability to predict their future actions may undermine the trust of other states, since benevolence may change at a moment's notice. Likewise, a state which acts predictably and in its own interests, even when it is known to adhere to agreements, may be deemed untrustworthy if the state takes overtly hostile actions. The decision of whether or not to trust is an evaluation done over time and can be altered by emotions, history, culture and personal relationships. Nevertheless, it is of central importance to negotiations, and the Tatarstan-Russia autonomy negotiations were no exception.

Practical indicators that will be used to inform the analysis of trust in this study include: the character and quality of personal relationships between political elites, willingness to cooperate, common goals among elites and governments and credibility among peers.

Elite trust enabled Tatar leaders to use personal networks to gain favor with federal leaders and to be perceived as a reasonable group that could act as a mediator and example to other republics. As a result, the Russian leadership viewed the Tatar elite as a group with whom negotiation was possible. The non-escalation of the conflict kept it within the Federal legal system, which was advantageous to Tatarstan, where most of the republic's elites were members of the Soviet regime with ties to Moscow, and had knowledge of the legal system. Their experience made the playing field more level, and Tatarstan was able to legally block key anti-autonomy efforts by the Kremlin.

Authoritarianism, although it is widely studied and has many unfortunate cases, has numerous definitions presented in the scholarly discourse. While these definitions disagree on the details, they generally accept authoritarianism as a system where the power is held by the leader rather than the population. Theodore Vestal defines authoritarianism as a "repressive system that excludes political challengers", with "highly concentrated and centralized power structures" which use political and social institutions and groups to "mobilize people around the goals of the government."²⁸ Authoritarianism has many different degrees to which it is practiced, including "semi-authoritarianism", which are particularly pertinent to the governments of the former Soviet states and satellites. Marina Ottaway defines semi-authoritarian regimes as "ambiguous systems that

²⁸ Theodore M. Vestal, *Ethiopia: A Post-Cold War African State*. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 17.

combine rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy, the existence of some formal democratic institutions and respect for a limited sphere of civil and political liberties with essentially illiberal or even authoritarian traits....regimes determined to maintain the appearance of democracy without exposing themselves to the political risk that free competition entails."²⁹ Thomas Carothers agrees that the motivation of these leaders, whom he calls "soft strongmen," is to balance their stability in a position of power and their control over the populace. He explains: "Semi-authoritarian regimes follow some forms of democracy yet maintain sufficient limits on political openness to ensure they are in no real danger of losing their grip on power."³⁰

In this thesis, authoritarianism will be defined as a political system that is centralized at all levels of government, gives political advantage to the regime's interests, and has a weak or non-existent opposition. Authoritarian regimes have numerous indicators, not all of which must be present to be considered authoritarian, since in real cases these characteristics are observed to different degrees in every government. Vestal identifies five characteristics of authoritarian regimes, to include: "rule of men, not rule of law", "rigged elections", "all important political decisions made by unelected officials behind closed doors", "a bureaucracy operated quite independently of rules, the supervision of elected officials, or concerns of the constituencies they purportedly serve", and "the informal and unregulated exercise of political power".³¹ Practical indicators that will used to inform the analysis of authoritarianism in this study include: lack of transparency, corruption, weak civil society, lack of independent media, continuity of

²⁹ Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 3.

³⁰ Thomas Carothers, "Struggling with Semi-Authoritarians" In *Democracy Assistance: International Co-operation for Democratization*, ed. Peter J. Burnell. (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 210.

³¹ Theodore M. Vestal, *Ethiopia: A Post-Cold War African State*. (Westport, CT: Prager, 1999), 16.

political elite, weak or non-existent opposition to the ruling regime, and government involvement in the economy.

Through regional authoritarianism, the Shaimiev government maintained stability by controlling electoral procedures, government institutions, media and opposition groups, which proved to be of great benefit to the federal center in transition. This stability gave the federal authorities incentive to assist the Shaimiev administration in power, which limited the chaos in the Federation. The Tatarstan government manipulated nationalist groups to be more active to put pressure on the Russians, reiterating the need for Tatar-Russian cooperation.

In the negotiations between Tatarstan and Russia, trust and authoritarianism complemented one another to result in a treaty allowing Tatarstan a high level of autonomy. In this situation, trust and authoritarianism developed prior to the commencement of negotiations, so it cannot be said that one affected the onset of the other during the negotiations. What can be said is that authoritarianism was a necessary foundation on which to set the preexisting trust between elites. Trust, just as Larson explains, is given within a specific confine, which means that the state which trusts a region will only devolve this trust within the confines of that state's territory. If this region is authoritarian, then there is more predictability and ability to take only the actions in the regimes' interests, both indicators of trustworthiness. In the relationship between Tatarstan and Russia, the shared experiences and personal relationships of the political elite enabled judgment as to penchant for adversarial behavior or potential to renege on agreements. The regional authoritarianism further supported the perception of the regional government as trustworthy, because they were predictable, reliable, and

acted in their own interests, which included preserving stability. Authoritarian control was also a bargaining chip for the republican regime, which could raise and lower the separatist volume in order to pressurize negotiations. In this case it is clear that both authoritarianism and trust were necessary to maximize Tatarstan's autonomy within the Russian Federation.

This thesis will show how these dynamics played out during the Yeltsin and Putin administrations and will demonstrate how these dynamics, elite trust and authoritarianism must both be present in order for the republic to achieve the level of autonomy that Tatarstan enjoys today.

Elite trust and regional authoritarianism acted upon each other to keep the balance of incentives for both Tatarstan and Russia. As an authoritarian regime, the Tatar government wanted to remain in power and manipulated opposition groups to demonstrate its ability to keep order in the region. The Russian government, wanting calm in its ethnic regions, valued the stability of the Shaimiev regime, which it perceived as more reasonable than other republics due to shared values and political pasts.

Chapter 2 will explain the dynamic of elite trust and Chapter 3 will explain the authoritarianism of Shaimiev's regime. Chapter 4 will present a comparison of Russia's autonomous republics and will analyze how elite trust and regional authoritarianism affected their level of autonomy.

CHAPTER 2

ELITE TRUST

Trust is an essential component of the dynamics of the relationship between the leadership in Tatarstan and Russia. This chapter will show that Shaimiev and the Kremlin have for decades taken actions for political gain that were not completely in the interests of their own populations, and that the relationship between individual leaders was the cause of the amicable negotiations and agreements.

In this analysis, trust defined as the relationship between individuals or groups of individuals whose relationship is characterized by a positive relationship, long-term interaction, coinciding interests and the participants' rational actions. A key indicator of trust is a positive relationship, where prejudices, grudges or resentment do not interfere with the interaction of the parties. It is important for trust that the participants in a relationship do not harbor ill will for the other side personally or as a group, such as ethnic or national prejudices which increase the incentives to do harm to the other party. A negative relationship also is based on or is perceived to be based on a past breach of trust by one or both sides. Trust is also indicated by the length of interaction. A longer interaction allows both sides to learn how the other side will react and to gauge their reliability. When the interests of the parties to the relationship coincide, there tends to be stronger trust, since each knows that what harms their interest will also harm the interest

of the other. This is, however, difficult to analyze, especially between elites who are engaging in a personal relationship. At this level, for example, the leaders' incentives could be to maintain power through authoritarianism, although they publicly support democratization. In this case, the leaders' incentives might lead to actions reinforcing one another in their authoritarian control and maintaining the status quo. An indicator of trust that is perhaps the most important and essential characteristic is the rational action of the participants. Trust is based on knowing what the other will do and an irrational individual or group will behave in an unpredictable manner, not necessarily based on their own interests, or past actions and agreements.

In the relations between Russia and Tatarstan, as they negotiated for a resolution to Tatarstan's autonomy demands, relations were tense, but they had the potential to become even more contentious without a successful negotiation. Russian leaders were concerned about a "parade of nationalities" breaking away from the Federation, and although the Tatarstan government did not threaten secession, its numerous nationalist groups did. Tatarstan was not equipped to function independently of Russia. Both sides had much to lose if the situation ended in violence. Russia feared losing further territory and feared that if Tatarstan became violent, other regions would be incited to secede. Tatarstan's leadership was adverse to violence, as it was no match for the Russian army. Both were interested in a negotiated, non-violent solution to the autonomy demands, and because many Tatar and Russian leaders were members of the former Soviet regime, they had an existing connection which facilitated the trust that is essential in a successful negotiation.

This chapter will show how the trust established through shared experiences in the former regime benefitted Tatarstan. Russian leaders tended to give the republic deference regarding its stubbornness and boldness to challenge Moscow in the autonomy negotiations. This trust was utilized by Tatarstan's leadership to create the perception of being political insiders, which allowed them to negotiate on a legal level, even when their actions were in violation of Russian Federation laws. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, trust between the Tatar and Russian elites has facilitated non-violent and relatively amicable relations.

SHARED PASTS

The basis of the trust between the Russian and Tatar leadership were the personal connections they developed while members of the Soviet government. This personal network was created by the Soviet use of appointments, Party congresses and sub-organizations which brought people together and allowed them to make connections. Elites in federal and regional government were linked through shared values and social norms, links which proved to be integral in the negotiation process.

The Communist system was structured to bring politicians and bureaucrats to the center, Moscow. Typically, a politician could work his way to higher ministerial posts, take a position in the Party and become an influential political member of the government. Party Congresses brought together all of these types of officials, as did regional congresses and congresses, which oversaw certain aspects of society, like religious organizations.³²

³² Martin S. Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 71.

The large number of appointed positions encouraged the development of a network of insiders. Overall, the Soviet system engendered in its members the feeling of being part of the club. Even when this club officially dissolved, the members undoubtedly still knew who they were and maintained a feeling of fraternity. When the Soviet Union fell, these bureaucrats and politicians became the members of the new Russian government.

ELITE CONTINUITY

Continuity of leadership from the Soviet regime to the Russian Federation allowed the social networks created under the Communist system to persist and become new networks on a regional and national scale. In Tatarstan, the continuity of leadership from the Soviet to the Post-Soviet period was nearly complete. Shaimiev facilitated this continuity by himself remaining in control of the republic, and facilitating the majority of the apparatchiks also staying in power.

Shaimiev was born in Tatarstan in 1937 and graduated from the Kazan Agricultural Institute. He became the Republic's Minister of Irrigation then was promoted to the Tatarstan Council of Ministers in the early 1980s, first as Deputy Chair, then as Chair. In 1989 he took the position of First Secretary of the Tatarstan Communist Party.³³ When Tatarstan declared sovereignty in 1990, Shaimiev became the first President, and retained most of the officials with whom he had served in the Soviet regime.

Shaimiev's first Prime Minister was Mukhammat Sabirov, who had previously held industrial management positions and party secretaryships and since 1983 had served as the Deputy Chair of Tatarstan's council of ministers. Farid Mukhametshin, Shaimiev's

³³ Mary McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 49.

former Prime Minister and the current speaker of the Tatarstan Parliament, began his career in the Komsomol, then serving as Minister of Trade, and eventually rising to the position of Speaker of the Supreme Soviet and a Deputy Chair of the Council of Ministers. Shaimiev's Vice President, Vasily Likhachev, a Russian, stood out among the overwhelming number of Tatars in high positions. Likhachev, former speaker of the Tatarstan Soviet, was specifically chosen because his ethnicity furthered the image of Tatarstan as a cooperative, multi-ethnic region, and because he was polite, tactful, and would not clash with Shaimiev. A lawyer by trade, Likhachev was given few responsibilities and was charged with promoting Tatarstan's image abroad.³⁴

In addition to the continuity of the highest positions in the Tatarstan government, there was marked continuity in the entire republican administration. In 1992, of the 30 ministers, chairs of state committees, and other appointed positions in the Tatarstan government, 26 were Tatar and 17 were former regime members. Additionally, only one person of the 30 came from a non-*nomenklatura* position, two were born outside of Tatarstan and one did not receive his higher education in Tatarstan.³⁵ This trend had not changed by 1994, when a study found that 78% of the republic's executive posts were held by Tatars, and 68% were held by members of the previous regime. If the list of positions was increased to include positions previously appointed by the *nomenklatura*, then there was a 92% continuity of previous regime members.³⁶

Shaimiev's regime was also heavily slanted toward the rural population, which in Tatarstan, tended to hold more nationalist views. In 1994, 75% of the government was

³⁴ Ibid., 49, Kimitaka Matsuzato, "From Ethno-Bonapartism to Centralized Caciquismo: Characteristics and Origins of the Tatarstan Political Regime, 1900-2000," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 17, no. 4 (2001), 63.

³⁵ McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty*, 49, 50.

³⁶ Ibid., 50

from rural areas and almost 50% was trained in agricultural or veterinary fields.³⁷ The significance of the large percentage of republican elites from rural background is the “village culture” by which they lived and which affected their relationships and governing style. This culture is characterized by “traditional customs of servility; disdain for dissent and opposition; favoritism toward people from the same milieu, especially nepotism; distrust for strangers, particularly urbanites and the more educated stratum of society; self righteousness; and narcissism.”³⁸ For Shaimiev's regime, a group of politicians and bureaucrats holding these values would make his ability to control all aspects of political life an easy one.

TRUST IN ACTION: YELTSIN AND SHAIMIEV

In republic-federal interactions, there was a similar continuation of social networks, and the respect and trust built over years of Soviet camaraderie resulted in the Tatar leadership often being given the benefit of the doubt, and enjoying a place of privilege in the minds of the Russian leadership. Russian leaders had strong incentives to support the continuity of former Soviet officials in the new republican governments. The Kremlin was deeply concerned about any additional loss of territory in the post-Soviet transition, and wanted to avoid even a small territory from achieving independence for fear of precedent setting and the further “unraveling” of their federation.

Having a relationship or shared past with regional leaderships benefitted the Russian leaders by maximizing the predictability and stability of their relations. The greater the bond between the center and periphery governments, the greater their ability

³⁷ Ibid., 50

³⁸ Shireen Hunter, Jeffrey L. Thomas and Alexander Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 224.

to bargain and prevent enmity. Both sides benefitted from a closer relationship, as they could more easily work together to maximize their economic benefits from the perspective of transportation and production cooperation and avoid the heavy costs of conflict.³⁹ The relationship between Tatarstan and Russia during the Yeltsin and Putin regimes was substantively different, but in both periods Tatarstan enjoyed a "favored republic status" and was given the benefit of the doubt by the Kremlin.

The regions, sensing the impending disintegration of Russia in the spring of 1990, began to prepare for sovereignty, setting up the institutions needed to govern independently. Yeltsin needed regional support in order to oust Gorbachev, so in August 1990, once he had been elected chairman of the Russian parliament, he instructed the republics to "take as much independence as you can swallow." Yeltsin further tried to gain the republics' support by saying that he would allow them to control their natural resources, a loss for Russia and a deal-breaking condition for many of the republics.⁴⁰ Shaimiev successfully manipulated the 1991 election and made Yeltsin appreciate his importance to the President's success. Shaimiev orchestrated a low 36.6% turnout to Yeltsin's election in 1991, and only 16.4% of Tatarstan voters supported Yeltsin.⁴¹ Yeltsin got the message that he needed Shaimiev's support and that in order to gain this support, the republic would need more concessions.⁴²

³⁹ Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*, 220.

⁴⁰ Gail Lapidus and Edward W. Walker, "Nationalism, Regionalism and Federalism: Center-Periphery Relations in Post-Communist Russia" In *The New Russia: Troubled Transformation*, ed. Gail Lapidus (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 109., Edward W. Walker, "The Dog that Didn't Bark: Tatarstan and Asymmetrical Federalism in Russia," *The Harriman Review* 9, no. 4 (1996), 12.

⁴¹ Raphael Khakimov, "Prospects of Federalism in Russia: A View from Tatarstan," *Security Dialogue* 27, no. 1 (1996), 75.

⁴² Linda Roysi, "Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan" (Candidata Politicarum Rerum, University of Bergen), 53.

When Yeltsin was elected President on June 12, 1991, he began to make good on his promises, using presidential decrees to delegate power to the regional governments, although the Russian government was in general very opposed to granting independence to any regions.⁴³ Tatarstan won concessions in the 1994 agreement, but Russia's leadership immediately made it clear that this was not meant to be a model for other region-federation agreements. Moscow's non-acceptance of precedent setting in this case shows that when dealing with Tatarstan, the Yeltsin government was motivated by the interdependency with republican elites and made special allowances, especially regarding republican self-government and economic matters.⁴⁴ Under the 1994 treaty, President Yeltsin undertook not to interfere in the internal affairs of Tatarstan, while President Shaimiev gave a formal recognition for Moscow's supremacy and support for Yeltsin during the all-Russia elections of 1996.⁴⁵

The inconsistent treatment of Tatarstan compared to other republics came into stark relief when Russia commenced military operations in Chechnya in 1995. According to Hughes, the ethnicities of Yeltsin's negotiating team in the early 1990s were meant to predispose them from coming to an agreement with Chechnya. The negotiation team consisted of Sergei Shakhrai, a Terek Cossack and Minister for Nationality and Regional Affairs, Ramazan Abdulatipov, a Dagestani Avar and Nikolai Yegorov, a Russian from Krasnodar. Some witnessing the negotiations reported that it seemed as if Shakhrai held a historically-based animosity for the Chechens who are stereotyped as prone to violence.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., 52

⁴⁴ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 224

⁴⁵ Galina M. Yemeljanova, "Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects," *Asian Ethnicity* 1, no. 1 (March 2000), 39.

⁴⁶ James Hughes, *Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 59.

In fact, one argument for invading Chechnya used by Russian interventionists in 1995 was that Dudaev's aggressiveness toward Chechen independence could incite other autonomy-seeking republics, including in the North Caucasus, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.⁴⁷ The non-violence of the autonomy negotiation of Tatarstan in contrast to the violence of the Chechen wars shows a clear difference in attitude by the Russian-led negotiators. To the Russian administration, the Chechens, who were commonly perceived as irrational, deserved more animosity and suspicion than the more cooperative Tatars.



Figure 1. With Boris Yeltsin, former President of the Russian Federation. Kazan. June 1996.⁴⁸

Shaimiev and Yeltsin enjoyed a friendly and warm personal relationship. In general, Yeltsin made an effort to develop relationships with the "more obliging provincial barons."⁴⁹ He remained in contact with officials he had known through the *nomenklatura* or in the USSR and RSFSR parliaments, and went on a "charm offensive" with others. The group of regional leaders with whom Yeltsin had a confidential

⁴⁷ Ibid., 78

⁴⁸ M. Kozlovsky, "Photo Archive: With Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation. Kazan. June 1996," President of the Republic of Tatarstan, <http://president.tatar.ru/eng/photo/show/3001>

⁴⁹ Timothy J. Colton, *Yeltsin: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 287.

relationship included Nikolai Fedorov of Chuvashia, Nikolai Merkuskin of Mordovia, and Mintimer Shaimiev of Tatarstan.⁵⁰ Shaimiev proved especially useful to Yeltsin, because he tried to mediate the Chechen conflict. Yeltsin informed Shaimiev in the early summer 1994 that he was thinking of meeting with Dudaev.⁵¹ Shaimiev played a mediator's role in February 1996, submitting a peace plan to Dudaev and Yeltsin. It had seven points and called for talks on status, ceasefire, OSCE mediation, withdrawal of Russian forces, elections, reconstruction, and demilitarization.⁵² Although his attempts were unsuccessful, Shaimiev did what he could to aid the Russian President. The relationship was mutually beneficial. In May 1994, Yeltsin appeared in Kazan with Shaimiev and made comments on the signing of the power-sharing treaty with Tatarstan. "They beat me up and denigrated me for the treaty with Tatarstan, but nonetheless I have been proven right... Tatarstan has taken as many powers under the treaty as it can. The rest that remain with the federal government are enough to satisfy us."⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., 287

⁵¹ Ibid., 289

⁵² Hughes, *Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad*, 86.

⁵³ Colton, *Yeltsin: A Life*, 285.



Figure 2. With the Acting President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. Kazan Kremlin. March, 2000.⁵⁴

TRUST IS TESTED: PUTIN AND SHAIMIEV

The relationship between Russia and Tatarstan was not as congenial under Putin as it had been under Yeltsin. Still, Putin's actions demonstrate that he has respect for Shaimiev. On his birthday in 2003, Tatar-Inform news agency reported that Shaimiev received numerous calls and messages from the leaders of the Russian Federation. Putin himself said "Sincerely I believe that your knowledge and experience will promote dynamical development of economy and successful resolving of social issues of the republic, strengthening stability, friendship and harmonization of interethnic relations for the blessing of all peoples of Russia."⁵⁵ In Kazan, on Shaimiev's 70th birthday in 2007, Putin awarded Shaimiev the 1st degree Order "For Merits to the Fatherland," because of his "reputation, authority and political value," through which he had "greatly contributed

⁵⁴ M. Kozlovsky, "Photo Archive. with the Acting President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. March, 2000." President of the Republic of Tatarstan, <http://president.tatar.ru/eng/photo/show/3262>

⁵⁵ "Congratulations to the President," Tatar-Inform, <http://president.tatar.ru/eng/news/view/9218>

to constructing a truly federative state, at all times defending the principles of national integrity."⁵⁶

Opposition leaders in Tatarstan claim that the relationship between Shaimiev and Putin is too cozy. Fauzia Bayrimova, the leader of nationalist group *Ittifaq*, told the Tatarstan press in 2000 that there was a secret arrangement between then newly-elected Russian President Putin and Shaimiev to keep Shaimiev in office. The agreement allegedly stipulated that Putin would not block Shaimiev's plan to seek a third term in office in violation of the Tatar and Russian constitutional term limits. In return, Shaimiev would agree to change the republic's laws to coincide with federal statute.⁵⁷ It is difficult to know if these allegations are true, because Tatarstan's Constitution did eventually coincide with the federal level, and Shaimiev was elected to a third term. Also, *Ittifaq* is known for radical goals and outrageous, anti-regime statements. Nevertheless, the accusation is significant, because it highlights the fact that in a personally-connected, authoritarian system, there is little way to know what back-door deals are made between political elites. What is known about Shaimiev and Putin is that Shaimiev joined Putin's political party in 1999, and has since enjoyed an even higher level of prestige and political power. Bayrimova's accusation about Tatar laws being voluntarily changed to reflect the federal laws is hard to evaluate, because with the centralized, heavy-handed leadership of Putin, such a change was probably inevitable. We also know that the accusation about Shaimiev's agreement regarding term limits is at least partially true. We know that there was an agreement to "restart the clock" on term limits in 2004. Shaimiev

⁵⁶ "Vladimir Putin: "Mintimer Shaimiev does Everything for Tatarstan and Russia to Prosper and be Strong", " <http://president.tatar.ru/eng/news/view/18672> (April 7, 2009).

⁵⁷ Andrei Smirnov, "Tatarstan Retains Privileged Rank among Russian Republics," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 2, no. 183 (October 3, 2005).

himself admitted that there were talks between him and the federal leader: "I said many times before that I would not go for another term, but since the situation with elections in Russia had changed, and the price of stability in Tatarstan is too high, the President asked me to stay on for another term. We discussed the details and I decided to do it."⁵⁸

Regarding policy, however, Putin was not as lenient on Tatarstan. Under Putin's administration, recentralization was a goal of the federal government. Tatarstan was not immune, although it fared better than other republics. On May 17, 2000, Putin announced that the 89 subjects in the Russian Federation would be organized into seven federal administrative districts or okrugs, each with a presidential representative. These envoys would act as intermediaries, whom regional leaders would go through in order to communicate with Putin.⁵⁹ The envoys acted as filters for communication and assumed other broad powers, such as overseeing the work of federal agencies in their district.⁶⁰ The institution of the envoys was an effort to formalize the relations between the center and the regions and was aimed at subordinating regional leaders by adding an additional layer of bureaucracy between them the Russian government.⁶¹

The first envoy for the Volga Federal District, which includes Tatarstan, was former Russian Prime Minister Sergei Kirienko, an unusually powerful politician to be appointed to this position.⁶² This appointment was probably made because Putin recognized that the Volga Federal District includes some of the strongest and most independent regions of the federation, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Samara and Nizhny

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Eduard Ponarin, *The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan*. Central European University Center for Policy Studies, Open Society Institute, [2007]).

⁶⁰ Louise Jackson and Nichols Lynn, "Constructing "Federal Democracy" in Russia: Debates Over Structures of Power in the Regions," *Regional and Federal Studies* 12, no. 1 (2002), 103.

⁶¹ Ponarin, *The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan*, 15

⁶² Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 92

Novgorod. Only an accomplished, respected and strong envoy would have clout with the regional heads. In the end, these leaders did not use the chain of authority to deal with the federal center. Shaimiev, for example, always contacted Putin directly. The fact that Shaimiev was able to outright ignore the directive of the Kremlin shows the degree to which he had political latitude.⁶³

In 2005, some rights of local government were cancelled, including the control over natural resources, a very sensitive issue in Tatarstan. The Federal government also increased the amount of taxes to be given to the federal government.⁶⁴ Surprisingly, Tatarstan was affected very little by these federal changes. Shaimiev balanced the strategies of opposing Putin's measures which would reduce his power, while supporting those measures that would have no affect on him. This strategy also helped to keep to a minimum upset in Tatarstan over federal recentralization.

Under direction from Putin, the Prosecutor General's Office was tasked with evening the differences in the bilateral treaties with the republics, which in practice meant that many agreements with specific republics were broken. This restructuring also affected the republics' representation in the Federation Council, the upper house of Russia's Federal Assembly. Originally, a republic's seats were filled by regional governors and speakers of their legislatures, but under the new rules, republican leaders were obligated to select representatives to the Federal Assembly. The implied procedure was for these representatives to be selected in coordination with the Kremlin, thereby giving the President another way to control the politics of the semi-autonomous

⁶³ Ibid., 100

⁶⁴ Ponarin, *The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan*, 15.

republics.⁶⁵ At the height of the Prosecutor General's efforts, Putin visited Shaimiev in Kazan, in an effort to assuage discontent in Tatarstan. Shaimiev made no statements indicating that he was not offended by the Kremlin's actions. However, in the following months Shaimiev changed his description of Tatarstan from a "sovereign" to a "self-sufficient" republic, an obvious de-escalation of rhetoric.⁶⁶ Shaimiev is a master at non-committal fence-sitting, stating in the same period, "I also always defend the integrity of the Russian Federation. But this integrity does not mean that we should centralize all."⁶⁷ Overall, Shaimiev's reaction to the consolidation of power was moderate. He supported maintaining the 1994 power-sharing agreement, because, as he argued, no other documents or decrees could govern the Russian-Tatar relationship.⁶⁸

In September 2004, the Duma passed a bill that ended the direct election of regional leaders. The law dictated that all incoming governors be appointed and approved by local parliaments. The law also stipulated that if a local parliament did not approve the nominee three times in a row, the Russian President had the authority to dissolve the local parliament.⁶⁹ Despite the devastating impact of the bill on regional governance, Shaimiev supported the bill, stating, "As for the change of the form of election of heads of the regions, it is first of all caused by the fact that in many regions today little known people, endorsed by money capital, come to power. It is certainly not a point in Tatarstan, but if we look at Russia as a whole, at regions and republics, this problem is acute."⁷⁰

Shaimiev's position demonstrates that his motives are not to maintain a semi-autonomous

⁶⁵ Ivan Sukhov, "Russian Federalism and Evolution of Self-Determination," *Russia in Global Affairs* 5, no. 3 (2007), 4.

⁶⁶ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 51.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 60

⁶⁸ Ibid., 59

⁶⁹ Smirnov, *Tatarstan Retains Privileged Rank among Russian Republics*.

⁷⁰ "Russia can't Afford to be Weak," <http://www.president.tatar.ru/eng/pub/view/879> April 9, 2009).

Tatarstan, because this bill seriously sets back that goal. Shaimiev is most concerned with staying in power, which he achieves by altering his opinions, when necessary, to endear himself to Moscow. Shaimiev did not oppose the 2004 bill on the appointment of governors because, as a favorite of the Kremlin, he was not affected.

SUSTAINING PERSONAL TRUST

Tatarstan's unique status is due not only to the political maneuvering of its President. Shaimiev had something tangible to offer Putin, which gave him many reasons to allow Shaimiev more breathing room than other republican leaders. Shaimiev is a very strong leader in the Volga region and among other republics, evident from the significant speeches on ethnic sovereignty that have been delivered in Kazan, including Yeltsin's "take all the sovereignty you can swallow" speech.

Shaimiev has demonstrated the ability to mobilize votes and influence the public opinion and political movements by virtue of his authoritarian control in the Volga region. The "village culture" helped him sway public opinion, along with his authoritarian control of the republic. For its influence in the Volga region and among ethnic republics, any Russian President must consider the electorate of Tatarstan vital to his success and therefore must win the favor of Shaimiev. Yeltsin relied on the ethnic regions to win his 1996 Presidential election, which he acknowledged by showing gratitude to the regional leaders afterward. Shaimiev did not originally support Putin when he came to power in December 1999, but the Tatar leader recognized that Putin was not going to be as soft on the autonomy demands of the republics as Yeltsin was and decided that it would be in his best interest to support the new Russian President. In 1999,

the Fatherland-All Russia bloc was formed by an agreement between Shaimiev and Moscow Mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov, supported by Murtaza Rakhimov (President of Bashkortostan) and Ruslan Aushev (Ingush Lieutenant General). This party was instrumental in Putin's victory in the 2000 elections.⁷¹ On January 11, 2000, only two months before Putin's Presidential election, Shaimiev appeared on NTV Television and announced that "Putin is the choice of the citizens of Tatarstan."⁷² Shaimiev's January 2000 appearance demonstrates how he played an instrumental role in the electoral politics of the Volga and earned Tatarstan the reputation of being the leader of the ethnic republics.

THE BENEFITS OF EXPERIENCE

The Moscow News charged in 2007 that Shaimiev has managed to keep more sovereignty than is convenient for the Kremlin.⁷³ The article claimed that the inequitable allowance of sovereignty was accomplished by Tatar politicians using their trust with Russian elites and their inside knowledge of the Russian legal system to stall and prevent Russian anti-sovereignty measures. Shaimiev chose which issues to pursue very carefully, with forethought as to what level of sovereignty would be reasonable for a landlocked, small territory like Tatarstan to receive. This strategy made him appear more moderate and reasonable and enabled the negotiation with the Russian authorities to continue with little contention. Shaimiev's reasonable nature was an aspect that he emphasized during the negotiation process, constantly reiterating the idea that Tatarstan

⁷¹ Alexei Malashenko, "Islam and Politics in the 1990s" In *Islam and Politics in Russia and Central Asia*, eds. Stephane Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (London: Kegan Paul, 2001), 320.

⁷² Derek Hutcheson, *Political Parties in the Russian Regions* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 113.

⁷³ "Interior Minister Bound for Kazan?" *Moscow News*. March 2, 2007.

was not a rogue separatist region but a valuable member of the Russian Federation. In an interview with ITAR-TASS on February 25, 1992, Shaimiev stated, "I never talked of independence or even of separation. The question was not put that way...we have not raised any question about the borders, customs, military doctrine or our own currency. We, by all means, intend to strengthen our union with Russia and work out a treaty in the near future, which should stipulate the powers we can exercise together."⁷⁴

Trust enabled Tatar leaders more access to the legal system, and by keeping it within the bounds of this system, they were able to stop some actions by the Russian government. If they had not tried to keep their negotiations within the Russian legal framework, in other words, if there was a breakdown in trust between the sides, then they would not have been able to exercise this advantage.⁷⁵

On August 30, 1990, Shaimiev, as the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Tatars Soviet Socialist Republic signed the "Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic," which asserted "the inherent rights of Tatars, of the whole population of the Republic to self-determination," and with the goal of creating a "legal democratic state," proclaimed "Tatar state sovereignty." This sovereignty, according to the declaration, means that "the land, its natural resources and other resources on the territory of the Tatar SSR were the exclusive property of Tatar people," and was "basis for the creation of the Tatar SSR Constitution" which would "be supreme on the territory of the Tatar SSR," also referred to as The Republic of Tatarstan. This declaration also asserted the rights of Tatars to conduct international and inter-federal

⁷⁴ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 53.

⁷⁵ Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*, 220.

relations according to their own design.⁷⁶ Despite what this declaration asserted and what that meant for the interest of Russia, federal officials and Tatarstan's government quietly engaged in diplomacy regarding primarily economic issues.⁷⁷ The August 1991 coup, or *Putsch*, widened governmental control and created more chaos in the federal government, which Tatar leaders took advantage of to take decisive political maneuvers in their negotiations with Moscow.⁷⁸

In early 1992, talks over economic issues were held between Yegor Gaidar and Prime Minister of Tatarstan, Mukhammat Sabirov, and concluded with the "Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Tatarstan on Economic Cooperation." This document's primary impact was on oil exports, but opened the door to more talks.⁷⁹ Signed on January 22, 1992, this was the first of 12 separate agreements signed by the Tatar and Russian governments that were negotiated until February 15, 1994.⁸⁰

On March 21, 1992, Tatarstan officials decided to hold a referendum because their demands were not being met by the Russia government, including the abolition of federal taxes paid by republics. Meanwhile, the federal government was preparing a treaty to be signed by the ethnic regions.⁸¹ The referendum posed the question "Do you agree that the Republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, which builds its relations with the Russian Federation and other republics and states on

⁷⁶ "Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic,"

http://www.tatar.ru/?DNSID=c9b50d461fc588ce5f815a6d47208dd3&node_id=814

⁷⁷ Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*, 221.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 219

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 220

⁸⁰ "List of Intergovernment Agreements between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan," http://www.tatar.ru/?DNSID=c9b50d461fc588ce5f815a6d47208dd3&node_id=815 (accessed April 16, 2009)

⁸¹ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 42.

the basis of equal agreements?" and won with 62% of Tatarstan voters in agreement.⁸²

Turnout was 82%, and, to the disappointment of the federal authorities, most of the Russian population voted in the affirmative.⁸³

Two days after Shaimiev's successful referendum, he declared that Tatarstan would not sign the Federal Treaty. The treaty tried to formalize relations with the ethnic republics, and it stated that the republics were "sovereign," had the right to self-determination and prohibited federal authorities from intruding into regional affairs. Although this treaty appeared to be close to the republics' demands, Tatarstan refused to sign it. Tatarstan wanted to achieve no less than Union republic status and the Federal Treaty granted the republics less status than the union treaty under Gorbachev. The Tatarstan leadership did want a relationship with Russia, it just wanted to not be a subordinate federal subject.⁸⁴ The instincts of Tatar officials to not sign the treaty offered by Moscow were correct; as became clear later, this treaty was only based on intentions and did not set up any mechanisms for the document to be enforced.⁸⁵ The bold move of not signing the federal treaty was enabled by the strong showing of support for Tatarstan's autonomy demonstrated by the referendum. This support was vital for Shaimiev, because having this popular support behind his defiance of the Kremlin decreased the Russian ability to retaliate.

Yeltsin appealed to the Russian Parliament to stop the Tatar referendum, fearing it would tear the Russian Federation apart. The Russian Constitutional Court ruled that the referendum and Declaration of State Sovereignty were in violation of the Russian

⁸² Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*, 219.

⁸³ Musina, *Contemporary Ethnosocial and Ethnopolitical Processes in Tatarstan*, 204; Walker, *The Dog that Didn't Bark: Tatarstan and Asymmetrical Federalism in Russia*, 18.

⁸⁴ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 43.

⁸⁵ Khakimov, *Prospects of Federalism in Russia: A View from Tatarstan*, 44.

Constitution to which Tatarstan was subordinate.⁸⁶ This ruling meant that the referendum had to be carried out again before Tatarstan could sign the Federal Treaty.⁸⁷ With the exception of Chechnya and Tatarstan, all the ethnic republics signed the treaty. The Tatarstan referendum legally stalled the process of Tatarstan joining the Russian Federation, causing more of a headache for Yeltsin and giving Shaimiev more bargaining power the longer the republic remained in legal limbo.

Tatarstan adopted a constitution on November 6, 1992, that reaffirmed that Tatarstan "is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, associated with the Russian Federation and Russia on the basis of an Agreement on the reciprocal delegating of plenary powers and subjects of authority."⁸⁸ The key to this document was that it declared the relationship between Moscow and Kazan to be an "association," and implied equal status, rather than the status of federal subject. The constitution also asserted that republic laws were supreme over federal laws, and citizens were dual citizens of Tatarstan and Russia.⁸⁹

Shaimiev continued with the strategy of not acknowledging the legal challenges to his republic's founding documents. On April 25, 1993, and December 12, 1993, dates of federal referenda and elections, Tatars population boycotted the elections.⁹⁰ The boycott sent the message that if Tatarstan did not have sovereignty, it would not participate in federal matters. The Russian constitution, adopted on December 1993, included a clause which Tatarstan used to legitimate its actions: "Outside of the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and the powers of the Russian Federation on issues

⁸⁶ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 42.

⁸⁷ Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*, 220.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 219

⁸⁹ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 44, 45.

⁹⁰ Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*, 219.

within the joint jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and the subjects of the Russian Federation, the subjects of the Russian Federation shall exercise the entire spectrum of state power."⁹¹

After the ratification of each of their constitutions, the Russia and Tatarstan set out to establish the first power-sharing treaty in the Russian Federation.⁹² The agreement was signed on February 15, 1994, and is called, "On the demarcation of Subjects of Jurisdiction and on Mutual Delegation of Plenary powers between Organs of State Authority of the Russian Federation and Organs of State Authority of the Republic of Tatarstan."⁹³ This treaty is truly a compromise. Tatarstan agreed to be referred to as a "subject" of the federation, described as a state "united with the Russian Federation." Phrasing in the document differed from the way it was described in Tatarstan's Constitution, which used the phrase "associated with Russia." The Power-sharing treaty also did not list Tatarstan as a subject of international law, but Russia did concede to Tatarstan some powers referred to in the Russian constitution as joint federal-republican jurisdiction. This granted the republic the right to engage in foreign and international economic relations, write the republic's budget and tax policies, and to establish alternate forms of civil service for Tatar citizens in the place of Russian military service.⁹⁴

The power-sharing treaty did not resolve the many contradictions in the Russian and Tatar constitutions, but it brought the disagreement to a more stable point than it had been for four years. Shaimiev got a large amount of power in the agreement, namely fiscal control over taxes on the sale of alcohol, oil and gas as well as the right to transfer

⁹¹ "The Constitution of the Russian Federation,"

<http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/ch3.html> (April 16, 2009).

⁹² Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 224.

⁹³ Moukhariamov, *The Tatarstan Model: A Situational Dynamic*, 221.

⁹⁴ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 224.

the taxes paid on the military–industrial complex from the federal to the republican budget. Since many military facilities were located in Tatarstan and supported by the federal government, this revenue provided the republic with excess revenue. The tax advantages granted to Tatarstan in the power-sharing treaty are more obvious when compared to the other autonomous republics and regions. Tatarstan retained approximately 50% of the value-added tax revenue, while the other autonomous entities kept about 25%. The concession that enabled Tatarstan to enter into foreign economic agreements enabled the republic to become one of the wealthiest autonomous republics. Since then, Tatarstan has established economic ties with Turkey, Iran, Germany, France, the Netherlands, the UK, the USA, Australia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and Lithuania.⁹⁵

The high level of autonomy remained until April 2001, when Moscow attempted to bring the multiple republican constitutions into agreement with federal law. The Russian Supreme Court granted the federal government authority to take legal action against republics refusing to remove declarations of sovereignty from their constitutions, as well as the authority to remove uncooperative republican presidents and disband their legislatures. The Volga Federal District's envoy, Kirienko, announced that clauses regarding sovereignty would be stricken from the constitutions of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan.⁹⁶ In April 2002, Tatarstan adopted a new constitution that acquiesced to Russian demands but maintained the republic's right to conduct foreign relations, control its natural resources, and maintain a distinct Tatar citizenship. Most importantly, it incorporated the power-sharing treaty into the Tatarstan legal code, while maintaining

⁹⁵ Yemelianova, *Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects*, 39.

⁹⁶ Igor Barinovich, "Court Rules Federal Government can Move Against Tatarstan, Bashkortostan," *Russian Regional Report* 6, no. 19 (May 23, 2001).

Tatarstan's unity with Russia on a voluntary, not obligatory basis.⁹⁷ The April 2002 Tatarstan Constitution was still objected to by Russian officials who claimed that it violated federal law at least fifty times.⁹⁸

It took until March 2004 for Tatarstan to remove "sovereignty" from its constitution, and it was the last republic to do so, showing the skill and stubbornness of the Tatar government at putting up barriers to federal authority. It is clear how much leniency Tatarstan is given as far as not using force to implement the will of the Kremlin.⁹⁹ Shaimiev's approach has been to present himself as a member of the establishment, and to frame the autonomy conflict as a legal struggle. Speaking to the Tatarstan State Council in 2003 he said, "The Constitution of the Russian Federation treats the republics as states, and it is well known that all states have sovereignty. No matter what federation it is - USA or Switzerland, a federation subject is considered sovereign within the frameworks of its powers. It might be the time for Russia as well to recognize that the federation is constructed on the basis of shared sovereignty i.e. on precise division of powers between the centre and the subjects."¹⁰⁰ Shaimiev was able to manipulate the perception of himself and the perception of Tatarstan vis-à-vis sovereignty and skillfully remained on amicable terms with the Russian government throughout.

Trust is an essential component of the dynamics of the relationship between the leadership in Tatarstan and Russia. It enabled Tatar leaders to use personal networks to

⁹⁷ "List of Moscow's Objections is Long Despite Passage of Amended Constitution," *RFE/RL Tatar-Bashkir Weekly Review* (April 5, 2002).

⁹⁸ "Possible Showdown Over Tatarstan Constitution Looms," *RFE/RL Newsline* (July 2, 2002).

⁹⁹ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 48.

¹⁰⁰ "On Situation in the Republic and Main Directions of Social and Economic Policy in 2003," <http://www.president.tatar.ru/eng/pub/view/729>

gain favor with federal leaders and to be perceived as a reasonable group that could act as a mediator and example to other republics. The non-escalation of the autonomy negotiations kept it within the Federal legal system, which was advantageous to the republic's elites, most of whom were members of the Soviet regime with ties to Moscow. Their experience made the playing field more level, and Tatarstan maximize its autonomy within the bilateral treaty.

CHAPTER 3

REGIONAL AUTHORITARIANISM

In Russia's regions, little has changed in governance since the days of hammers and sickles under the Soviet Union. The democratization of Russia was not realized here, and in fact, most of the republics' leaders until the late 1990s were their last Communist leaders. Tatarstan is no exception, and Shaimiev has remained in power due to his ability to sustain authoritarianism in the republic. Nikolai Petrov, a leading scholar on Russia's regions evaluates democracy based on ten characteristics. In this assessment, authoritarianism is assumed to have characteristics that are lacking in democracy, or the opposite of those outlined by Petrov. Authoritarianism is thus characterized by a political structure that is off balance in favor of the regime, lack of transparency, no free and fair elections, a weak or non-existent opposition to the ruling regime, a lack of independent media, corruption, government involvement in the economy, weak civil society, continuity of political elite, and centralized control of all levels of government.¹⁰¹

Authoritarianism is a key component of the mechanisms that allowed Tatarstan and Russia to come to an agreement which granted Tatarstan an unprecedented level of autonomy. Control over the population of his republic and the ability to incite anti-Kremlin sentiment were tools used by Shaimiev to make his leadership valuable to the

¹⁰¹ Nikolai Petrov, "The Democracy of Russia's Regions," *Moscow Carnegie Center: Briefing* 7, no. 9, <http://www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/briefings/Briefing-2005-09-web.pdf>

Russian government. Some believe that he held in his control the indirect ability to make federal-republican relations throughout Russia more difficult or more harmonious. He was careful to not become too authoritarian so as to incite anti-regime movements, and effectively limit opposition voices. Nevertheless, Shaimiev enjoys the reputation of being one of the most authoritarian republican leaders in the Russian Federation.¹⁰²

Authoritarian statements made by Shaimiev in response to Putin's centralization efforts demonstrate how Shaimiev was not against a strong central government, and believed it was necessary for stability. Since the reforms of the Putin Presidency, especially the appointment of governors, regional heads are seen in a sympathetic light, as victims of an overreaching federal executive. This is not the case with Shaimiev; he has used his good rapport with the Russian leadership to exercise more autonomy than most republic presidents and has continued, if not exceeded, the amount of quasi-authoritarian control held by the Russian President. Vladimir Gelman stresses that authoritarian leadership is common in Russian politics. He identifies a 5-pronged pattern of regional authoritarianism that consists of "the domination of executive authority over legislative authority," "strong personal loyalty between Moscow and the governor of the region," "indirect control over the mass media exerted by the executive branch," "neutralization or suppression of potential opposition in the region," and "patronage of non-governmental organizations."¹⁰³ Shaimiev is a regional authoritarian in this pattern, manipulating political actors, the electoral process, opposition groups, and mass media.

¹⁰² Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 75.

¹⁰³ Cameron Ross, *Federalism and Democratisation in Russia* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 128.

MANIPULATION OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

According to the Constitution of Tatarstan, the republic is theoretically a democracy, but President Shaimiev has not allowed this to be realized. The official distribution of power in Tatarstan is a presidential-parliamentary of separation of powers, yet the de facto power rests with the President. Unchecked by the legislature, Shaimiev has his own broad legislative powers.¹⁰⁴ The President of Tatarstan has broad control over the cabinet and ministers. He is able to directly appoint local chief executives and in the 1990s, “suggested” candidates for the Parliament, a crossover of his influence to the legislature. Eventually, the local chief executives became obligated to run for parliamentary seats. Shaimiev essentially appointed the members of Parliament, given the electoral advantage of regime incumbents. On paper, this practice ended with the 2002 Tatarstan Constitution, but this change has not yet been implemented.¹⁰⁵

Shaimiev kept the elites close to him in order to facilitate control over republican politics. Legitimate political challengers are prevented from gaining popularity and running in elections. Shaimiev's ability to fill the legislature with his allies is seen in the 1999 election, when of the 123 deputies elected, 107 were on Shaimiev's list of allies, mostly chief administrators and oil and gas company directors.¹⁰⁶ Shaimiev has the reputation in Russia of being a "feudal lord" over the republic. There have been charges of corruption because of the amount of control that Shaimiev has over industries that are very lucrative and essential to Russia. Many of these businesses are under control of Shaimiev's relatives or close associates.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 96.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 98

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 74

¹⁰⁷ *Interior Minister Bound for Kazan?*, 2.

Media reports estimate that Shaimiev's family and close friends, due to their influential positions, influence as much as 70% of the republic's economy.¹⁰⁸ Shaimiev's sons Airat and Radik personally financially benefitted from their positions in the oil industry. Reportedly, it is common knowledge in Tatarstan that Prime Minister Rustam Minnikhanov, got his position through a shared passion for car racing with Shaimiev's son. The financial benefits of those in Shaimiev's "inner circle" are evident from the luxurious multi-storied dachas of regime leaders that surround Kazan and other cities.¹⁰⁹

The regime recruits new members of the administration from the more heavily Tatar, clan-loyal, agrarian regions of Tatarstan.¹¹⁰ Many of the members of Shaimiev's government are from Aktanyshskii, the President's native region.¹¹¹ Shaimiev uses *zemlyachestvo*, or "gathering your own people around you," to build an administration that is loyal, predictable and which he can manipulate. These "Zemlyak" networks facilitated cooperation vertically, through multiple levels of government, and horizontally, across the municipalities of the republic. These networks are a result of the Soviet "nativisation" policy that included the political ranks with locals, creating the current Tatar elite. Shaimiev takes advantage of this native Zemlyak network, but he is not shy to remove members of his administration if it is to his benefit. To this end, he has consolidated his power in the Presidency with a very loyal administration under him.¹¹²

Shaimiev keeps this administration loyal by tightly controlling the electoral process. Election laws in Tatarstan do not establish the same protections for free and fair elections as the federal laws do. For example, republican election laws do not require that

¹⁰⁸ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 74.

¹⁰⁹ Yemelianova, *Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects*, 44.

¹¹⁰ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 74.

¹¹¹ Yemelianova, *Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects*, 44.

¹¹² Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 74.

party representatives are included in local election committees to carry out and count the votes.¹¹³ The Tatarstan authorities have overtly manipulated election laws at least eight times since 1992. "The Law on Presidential Elections in Tatarstan" has been altered five times, each time to aid Shaimiev. In 1996, the provision stating that the President could be no older than 65 was changed so that there is no age limit. Shaimiev was 59 at the time. Similarly, the term limits have been altered to benefit Shaimiev. In 1999 the Russian Constitutional Court ruled that term limits were not retroactive. This meant that Shaimiev's third term, to which he was elected in 2001, was officially counted as the first of his two permitted five-year terms.¹¹⁴ In 2001, the electoral law was altered to coincide with the federal law "On the Fundamental Guarantees of Electoral Rights." A major change was switching from a "negative" to "positive" voting technique. Negative voting meant the voter crossing out the names of candidates they wished to vote against, and was a persistent aspect of the Soviet system, used to psychologically manipulate voters and give the incumbents an advantage.¹¹⁵ Sadly, the legal changes did not amount to changes in practice, and elections continued to be conducted contrary to federal laws.

Shaimiev manages the various opposition groups within Tatarstan through a combination of restriction of freedoms, appeasement, and undermining. He works hard to control the image and message of the Republic through media and public relations. The result is his political security and longevity, as he effectively uses soft control tactics which do not rouse the population to oppose his authoritarianism. The population of Tatarstan has been accused of being politically indifferent because they placed a higher

¹¹³ Ibid., 102

¹¹⁴ "Daily Review from Tatarstan," *Tatar-Bashkir Report* (February 16th, 2004). Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 102.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 103

value on stability than democracy and fell back into their old patterns of submission to the state.¹¹⁶

The Party of *Edinstvo i Progress* (“Unity and Progress”), led by R. Khakimov and A. Kolesnik, is the party of Shaimiev's regime and is the only party with political power. Other parties are allowed to exist; they have minor support and are used by Shaimiev to appear more pluralistic.¹¹⁷ In 1995, Shaimiev mobilized the entire government to prevent any non-regime candidates from winning a parliamentary seat. The resulting Parliament facilitated his consolidation of power to the Presidency. A key change during this Parliament's tenure was an end to parliamentary ratification of appointed positions.¹¹⁸ In 1996 Shaimiev was up for re-election to a second five-year term. Although opposition candidates were encouraged, none successfully gathered the 50,000 signatures needed to be on the ballot. As a result, Shaimiev was unopposed and won re-election with 97.5% of the vote. The high turnout of 78% confirmed Shaimiev's high level of support in Tatarstan.¹¹⁹ The 2001 Presidential election was the first time Shaimiev ran with opposition candidates on the ballot. These five candidates were Sergei Shashurin (Independent), Ivan Grachev (Equal Rights and Legality), Robert Sadykov (Communist Party, Republic of Tatarstan), and Alexandr Fedorov (Independent). In the election Shaimiev won with more than four times the percentage points than his four opponents combined. Some observers charged that this opposition was artificial and only meant to

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 79

¹¹⁷ Yemelianova, *Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects*, 102.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 43

¹¹⁹ Walker, *The Dog that Didn't Bark: Tatarstan and Asymmetrical Federalism in Russia*, 30.

make the election appear more democratic and honest. International observers reported biased media coverage that gave advantage to Shaimiev.¹²⁰

NATIONALIST DISSENT

The primary opposition to Shaimiev's regime has been from nationalists. These groups grew out of the Post-Communist transition, which unleashed anger over Russian imperialism and was fueled by political uncertainty and chaos. Tatar nationalist groups did not have majority support, and their members were primarily rural Tatars who had little contact with Russians.¹²¹ The rhetoric used was non-compromising, but did not incite violence. The demands were lofty, at times extreme, and meant to incite anti-Russian sentiment. In 1993, Tatar nationalist newspaper *Suverenitet*, meaning "Sovereignty," and *Nezavisimost*, meaning "Independence" published the following statements:¹²²

"Tatarstan will be an independent state in spite of all the obstacles erected by the official Moscow... Can we, Tatarstan, not lacking in national pride, honour and dignity, be citizens of Russia, an empire that has arisen as a result of the colonial wars which had destroyed the Tatar state along with the majority of its population?"¹²³

"The introduction of two state languages in Tatarstan is a death verdict against the Tatar language and the Tatar nation... To make us citizens of the Russian Federation means supporting Russia's imperial policy."¹²⁴

"Tatarstan will never be a state within the framework of a wretched and famished Russian Federation; the independent state of Tatarstan has broken away from the neighboring Russian Federation like a spaceship reaching out to far-away worlds and planets"¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 106.

¹²¹ Roza N. Musina, "Contemporary Ethnosocial and Ethnopolitical Processes in Tatarstan" In *Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Soviet World: Case Studies and Analysis*, ed. L. M. Drobizheva (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 197.

¹²² Metta Spencer, *Separatism: Democracy and Disintegration* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 250.

¹²³ Published in *Nezavisimost*, no.3 vol 5, 1993, page 3, as cited in Georgiy I. Mirsky, *On Ruins of Empire: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Former Soviet Union* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997), 140.

¹²⁴ Published in *Suverenitet*, no. 2, vol. 23, 1993, page 4, as cited in *Ibid.*, 140.

“Tatarstan can live without its neighbor, Russia, but Russia can hardly survive without Tatarstan...The people of Tatarstan will build a flourishing state not subordinated to any foreign power, Tatarstan will become a member of the UN.”¹²⁶

Academics at Kazan State University can be credited with the founding of the current Tatar nationalist movement. In June 1988, the Kazan members of the Russian Academy of Sciences gathered during the Party Congress to discuss formalizing the growing nationalist sentiments into an organization.¹²⁷ In January 1989, Tatars from across the Soviet Union held the first meeting of the All-Tatar Public Center (ATPC) in Kazan, marking the beginning of the modern Tatar nationalist movement. Their initial demands were the reduction of immigration of ethnic Russians into Tatarstan, and that Tatar to be designated Tatarstan’s official language. A more long-term goal of the ATPC was to raise the status of Tatarstan from an autonomous republic to a full union republic, which would enable it more control over the matters within its territory. The ATPC hoped that Tatarstan would eventually gain complete independence. In October 1989, ATPC membership in the USSR was approximately one million.¹²⁸ In 1992, the *Milli Mejlis*, a nationalist parliament was founded to counter the official Tatarstan Parliament.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Published in *Nezavisimost*, no. 4 vol. 6 1993, page 2, as cited in *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁶ Published in *Suverenitet*, no. 6, vol. 26, 1993, page 1, as cited in *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁷ Katherine E. Graney, *Of Khans and Kremlins: Tatarstan and the Future of Ethno-Federalism in Russia* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 19.

¹²⁸ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 217.

¹²⁹ Galina M. Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 34.



Figure 3. Tatar Public Center (TPC) of Naberezhnye Chelny (1988-1989)¹³⁰



Figure 4. The May demonstration: R. Mukhametdinov, F. Bairamova, M. Mulukov (1991)¹³¹

The Tatar Independence Party, commonly known as *İttifaq*, was a radical wing that broke off from the ATPC in 1990. According to their slogan, “Tatarstan for Tatars,”

¹³⁰ "Photochronicle. the Republic of Tatarstan: The Latest History," Republic of Tatarstan, http://www.tatar.ru/index.php?DNSID=57ab4099838a3c56d95335f3c4109386&node_id=1278

¹³¹ Ibid.

they demand a republican government that promotes Tatar interests in every way and excludes Russians, to whom *Ittifaq* is overtly hostile.¹³² At the group's fourth party congress in December 1997, *Ittifaq*'s leadership made this statement:

"We declare the national liberation struggle we are waging against the Russian empire to be henceforth known as jihad aimed at liberation from the infidel's slavery. We, Muslim nationalists, are launching a struggle for the creation of an Islamic state in Tatarstan."¹³³

Ittifaq advocates total and complete independence for Tatarstan, hoping that it will one day regain the glory of the "Tatar-Mongol Yoke." *Ittifaq* publishes the newspaper, *Altyn Urda*, meaning "The Golden Horde," and maintains branches in more than thirty regions of Tatarstan.¹³⁴ The group also has a subsidiary youth organization, *Azatliq*, meaning "Freedom."¹³⁵ *Ittifaq*'s leader, Fauzia Bayramova, is a former co-chairman of the ATPC and served in the Tatarstan Parliament from 1990 to 1995. In 1991, Bayramova held a 14-day hunger strike in Kazan protesting the Russian presidential elections being held in Tatarstan's territory. This protest was successful in pressuring the Tatarstan Parliament, who on May 27, 1991, decided that the Russian presidential election would not be held in Tatarstan.¹³⁶ In October of the same year Bayramova said,

"The great tragedy is that the [Tatar] nation has lost its pride. Would a nation that has any pride really allow such self-mockery in its history; would it really sell the Russians its language, religion and customs; and would it really accept their much inferior tradition? Would a Tatar who had any pride really mix his genealogy with that of the enemy? Would a Tatar who had any pride really look on calmly as his sacred lands were parceled out to others? Would a Tatar who had any pride really toil like a donkey for four centuries, pulling along the Russian newcomers? ...Tatar lands form half the Russian territory... It is time to raise the question of joining to Tatarstan the lands that belonged to Tatars of old and where they live now."¹³⁷

¹³² Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 86.

¹³³ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 219.

¹³⁴ Sabirzyan Badretdin, "Fauzia Bayramova: Tatarstan's Iron Lady," *The Tatar Gazette*, <http://tatar.yuldash.com/080.html>

¹³⁵ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 86.

¹³⁶ Badretdin, *Fauzia Bayramova: Tatarstan's Iron Lady*.

¹³⁷ Zverev, *Qualified Sovereignty: The Tatarstan Model for Resolving Conflicting Loyalties*, 126.

In general, nationalists were a secular movement, but Islam was emphasized as part of cultural identity and used to unify ethnic minorities in order to gain public support. The head of the ATPC confirmed the bond between Tatar culture and Islam in 1991: "The history of Tatar culture and enlightenment, the entire way of life, is closely connected to Islam. Therefore, Islam cannot be separate from national policy or from the national movement, and is closely connected to and cooperates with them."¹³⁸

Nur, or "Light," was a moderate political party that advocated secular aspects of Muslim identity, economic reforms and tried to work with non-Muslim ethnic groups in order to widen its base of support.¹³⁹ In the 1995 parliamentary elections, *Nur* won 5% of the vote in Tatarstan.¹⁴⁰ After the elections, Muslim leaders formed a different political party, the Muslims of Russia, which also failed because it could not overcome the Muslims' regional, ethnic and political differences. It never gained political capital outside of the Volga-Ural region.¹⁴¹

In the 1999 parliamentary elections, the Muslim population was politically fractured, as some leaders, including Shaimiev, supported Putin and joined the pro-government party directly. Other Muslim leaders supported the *Refakh*, or "Welfare" movement, which joined the pro-Putin Unity bloc for the December 1999 elections. Nationalists critical of Russian military action in Chechnya chose to join Chernomyrdin's, Our Home is Russia bloc.¹⁴² *Refakh* was successful in gaining 5 seats in

¹³⁸ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 218.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 262

¹⁴⁰ "Congress of Russian Muslims: For a Socially Oriented Economy in Russia's Muslim Regions," *Kommersant* (1995), Alexander Ignatenko, "The Choice of Muslims of Russia: They Will Vote for Stability, Not for Parties Or Governments with the Word Islam in their Names," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* September 3, 1999.

¹⁴¹ Sergei Nuriyev, "Islam in Russian Politics Today," *Moscow News* (August 21, 1997).

¹⁴² Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 266.

the Russian Parliament, the first Muslim movement or party to do so.¹⁴³ No other Muslim movements or parties won seats, and *Refakh* remained without influence in the Duma, controlling only 2.5% of all the seats.¹⁴⁴

In June 1998, *Ittifaq* and other nationalist groups founded the Muslims of Tatarstan movement, which was an alliance between nationalists and former members of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Tatarstan. Gabdulla Galiullin, the former mufti of Tatarstan, served as the first chairman, and advocated nationalist policies.¹⁴⁵ The significance of the creation of this organization was the formalization of the relationship between religious authorities and the nationalists, indicative of the radical ideological shift that occurred and the many ways the nationalist movements reorganized themselves in an attempt to gain power and popularity.

USEFUL NATIONALISM

Nationalists cooperated with the Tatarstan government and some were even regime members during the early period of autonomy-seeking. In the early 1990's Shaimiev's regime was much more sympathetic to the nationalist cause before the 1994 power-sharing treaty. Once the treaty was signed and the autonomy of Tatarstan was codified, Shaimiev alternately marginalized or incited the nationalist groups as was politically expedient for his regime. Political scientist and member of the opposition in Tatarstan, Vladimir Baliaev, agrees:

"I do not think Shaimiev created an ethno-territorial movement. He just played it up. In his time, he was helping the Tatar national movement, making it easier for them to register, finding places for them to meet, finance, etc. He let them, or even ordered directors of enterprises

¹⁴³ Dmitri Glinski-Vassiliev, *Islam in Russian Society and Politics: Survival and Expansion*. PONARS, [2001]).

¹⁴⁴ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 268.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 274

to bring crowds to the 'Square of Liberty', the central square of Kazan. Then he could literally refer to the 'will of the people.'¹⁴⁶

Shaimiev walked a dangerous line in manipulating the nationalists to mobilize when it benefitted him. The more popular Putin became, the more Shaimiev risked losing a confrontation because of overwhelming support for the President, especially if Shaimiev looked more authoritarian than Putin.¹⁴⁷ Shaimiev manipulated, undermined and controlled nationalist movements and opposition groups by forcing their disputes with the government into legal and parliamentary procedure. Shaimiev kept the nationalists away from his negotiations, which allowed him to appear more in control of his republic and to act as freely as he wished in these negotiations, because there was no pressure being asserted by his opposition, through protests or media.

From 1989 through 1994, relations were warm between Tatarstan government and nationalists, and the regional administration implemented some of nationalists' policies. In 1989, Shaimiev, as chairman of Tatarstan's Council of Ministers, assisted the nationalists in expanding their organization, which helped fuel the Russian rancor over the ethnic demands for sovereignty. Shaimiev sent a delegation to the first ATPC congress and granted the organization access to the Tatarstan media to help it spread its message and increase membership outside the republic.¹⁴⁸ The aspect of this assistance to the ATPC that shows Shaimiev's motives is the effort to expand the organization outside the republic. Shaimiev wanted to use the nationalists to put pressure on Russia, at a time and in a way that it benefitted him politically.

¹⁴⁶ Jeffrey Kahn, *Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 112.

¹⁴⁷ Ponarin, *The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan*, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 273.

In the years following 1989, Shaimiev requested help from the ATPC, *Ittifaq* and *Azatliq* to secure his position as head of the republic. In August 1990, as the Tatarstan Parliament was in session to debate the status of Tatarstan within the Russian Federation, the nationalist organizations mobilized 50,000 demonstrators to protest outside the parliament building. Spurned by this strong showing of public support for independence, the Parliament agreed to the autonomy demands favored by Shaimiev. This same protest was integral in the passage of the resolution declaring Tatarstan's sovereignty. Shaimiev personally benefitted as well, as the Parliament also created the position of President of the Republic. When Shaimiev first ran for President in June 1990, Shaimiev, he was endorsed by the ATPC, and was elected overwhelmingly.¹⁴⁹

During the same period, Tatarstan officials promoted the establishment of a Tatarstan Islamic administration separate from the federal Islamic administration, the Islamic Spiritual Board of the European Part of Russia and Siberia, or DUMES. The Tatar officials were successful, and the Islamic Spiritual Board of the Republic of Tatarstan or DUMRT was founded.¹⁵⁰ In this instance, Shaimiev's administration adopted a policy advocated by the nationalists and successfully convinced the Russian government to support it. This method of alternately appeasing both sides, being the ultimate opportunist, allowed Shaimiev to be on good terms with the Russians and the nationalists. Shaimiev was adept at picking his battles and manipulating the perceptions of his political counterparts so that they saw him as reasonable and open to negotiation. By playing both sides like this, Shaimiev avoided the cessation of negotiations with the Kremlin, punitive actions or even military force. Shaimiev also avoided inciting more

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 273

¹⁵⁰ Galina M. Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 34.

support for nationalist movements that could have resulted in him being removed from or voted out of office. Worse yet, aggravating the nationalists could have resulted in violence within Tatarstan from the small number of extreme nationalists. Shaimiev was successful in avoiding all of these negative outcomes and consolidating power under him to ensure stability.

With the first successes against Russia in the quest for autonomy, Shaimiev began to back off his support for the nationalists' causes. Once the nationalists no longer received their political and material support from Shaimiev's regime, they became politically irrelevant.¹⁵¹ As an attempt to become more relevant and have a place in the Republic's political debate, the groups' positions moved more to the extreme, and their actions became more violent. In October 1991, the nationalists held a large rally in front of Tatarstan's Parliament building marking the anniversary of the Russian conquering of Kazan. The protestors demanded that the parliament adopt a declaration of independence. This rally turned violent when the protesters tried to storm the Parliament building.¹⁵²

The platforms of *Ittifaq* and the *Milli Mejlis* became more extremist and pan-Islamist. In January 1996, the *Milli Mejlis* adopted an unofficial Tatar constitution that included the revival of *sharia* as law in the republic. Although the *Milli Mejlis* wanted *sharia* to be as interpreted in the moderate (Jadidist) interpretation, this was still a drastic swing toward extreme nationalism, and shows the desperation the groups were feeling.¹⁵³ The movement may have advocated *sharia* because they believed an increase in Muslim religiosity would increase the population's connection to their Tatar heritage and fuel nationalism. Unfortunately for the nationalists, these changes resulted in the opposite of

¹⁵¹ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 274.

¹⁵² Bukharaev, *The Model of Tatarstan: Under President Mintimer Shaimiev*, 102

¹⁵³ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 219.

the desired effect. Public support declined greatly due to the increasingly violent rhetoric and protests, which was shunned by the Tatar population.

While the Shaimiev government did not officially support this increasingly radical behavior, there is evidence that the regime incited nationalist groups to intensify their activities, which the regime then used as a bargaining chip with Moscow. The Russian government was wary of nationalist movements in the republics, and therefore needed the help of Shaimiev to appease them. In 1999, Shaimiev's government instigated a rise in nationalist sentiment to prepare for the expiration of the power-sharing treaty the same year. If the regime could cause a mild separatist or nationalist protest, then the Russian authorities might be more willing to extend the republic's benefits past the expiration of the power-sharing treaty. On September 15, 1998, Zaki Zainullin, an academic nicknamed the "Tatar Dudaev," in homage to the violent leader of the Chechen separatists organized a visible yet ineffective protest in front of the government building on Kazan's Square of Freedom without interference from the Shaimiev regime. Signs at the protest read "Shame to the Government of Tatarstan," "Tatarstan does not have sovereignty" and "the Tatar language should be the only state language of Tatarstan." Not only was this protest permitted by the government, but in early 1999, Zainullin was promoted to leader of the ATPC, most likely at the request of the government.¹⁵⁴

During the Putin presidency, nationalist activities did not have as much verve or public support as they did during Yeltsin's time in office, yet there were still protests and active political campaigns. Only weeks after Putin announced the federal districts and Presidential envoys, the ATPC staged republic-wide rallies and burned copies of a map of

¹⁵⁴ Yemelianova, *Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects*, 47.

the seven federal districts.¹⁵⁵ Annually on "Memory Day", which marks the fall of Kazan to Ivan IV in 1552, ATPC and *Azatliq* held rallies on Kazan's Freedom Square, burning effigies of Ivan the Terrible and delivering anti-Russian and anti-Shaimiev speeches. In October 2001, this rally attracted over 2,000 demonstrators.¹⁵⁶

UNDERMINING THE OPPOSITION

Shaimiev has exercised tight control over the opposition voices in Tatarstan, by absorbing key nationalist leaders into the administration, creating duplicate organizations, using bureaucratic "red-tape", incorporating nationalist ideology into regime policy and infringing on free speech. Shaimiev also has tightly controlled the members of his own government, especially if they took action without his approval. In 1995, Tatar officials periodically seized mosques and other religious facilities that were controlled by an unsanctioned Mufti. The appointed head of the government-sponsored Congress of Tatarstani Muslims, Mufti Gabdulla Galiulla, attempted to, on his own, seize a mosque and madrassa in Kazan. Since he was not acting on explicit orders from the regime, Galiulla was arrested.¹⁵⁷ In general, the regime policy allows the removal of officials who associate with or support nationalist groups.¹⁵⁸

Tatarstan's government undermined the nationalist groups by co-opting key leaders, who were asked to become part of the Shaimiev administration. In September 1989, Shaimiev, serving as first secretary of Tatarstan's Communist Party *obkom* (regional organization), appointed Rafael Khakimov, a key ATPC leader, to the position

¹⁵⁵ "Tatar Nationalists Burn New Federation Map," *RFE/RL Newswire* 4, no. 114 (June 13, 2000).

¹⁵⁶ Eleonora Rylova, "Ivan the Terrible Burned in Effigy in Kazan," *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* (October 16, 2001).

¹⁵⁷ Ponarin, *The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan*.

¹⁵⁸ Andrei Zolotov, "Keeping Islam in Line," *Moscow Times* (May 16, 1998).

of deputy head of the ideology department of the *obkom*, or Communist Party regional organization.¹⁵⁹ Khakimov later became a chief advisor to Shaimiev and a leader in his political party.¹⁶⁰

The government also created duplicate organizations to undermine the role of opposition groups in Tatar society. As a counterweight to the *Milli Mejlis*, the Tatarstan government sponsored All-Tatar World Congress, led by Indus Tagirov and representing Tatar communities worldwide. The All-Tatar World Congress endorsed Shaimiev's strategy of negotiation with Moscow and rejected the nationalists' demands that Shaimiev declare total independence.¹⁶¹ On the religious front, the regime began to promote an increased role for Islam in politics, imitating the nationalist use of Islam to unify public support. In 1998 Shaimiev named Gusman Iskhakov Mufti of Tatarstan and held the Congress of Tatarstan Muslims. A key reason for selecting Iskhakov was his political benefit to the Shaimiev administration. The Mufti wanted Kazan to become the Islamic capital of Eurasia, which would bring more notoriety and political power to the republic's leadership. Iskhov also wanted to take Muslim support from Mufti Talgat Tadjuddinov, head of the (federal) Spiritual Administration in Ufa, Bashkortostan. By undermining the control of Tadjuddinov over the Muslim population in favor of his hand-picked Mufti, Shaimiev further consolidated the politics of the republic.¹⁶²

The Shaimiev regime co-opted aspects of the nationalists' ideological program as a way of minimizing the popular support of these groups. The regime chose the most reasonable, attainable and popular aspects of the nationalists' demands and added it to

¹⁵⁹ Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security*, 273.

¹⁶⁰ McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty*, 60.

¹⁶¹ Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey*, 34.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 34

their policy agenda. In particular, they advocated for a distinct Tatarstan citizenship and the spread of the Tatar "brand" of Islam, EuroIslam. In April 1997, Tatarstan's Academy of Sciences recommended to the regime that the alphabet of the Tatar language be switched from the Cyrillic to Latin alphabet. In July 1997, the State Council passed a law introducing a Latin-based Tatar alphabet, a move intended to bring the republic closer to Europe and farther from Russian culture and media.¹⁶³

The regime also implemented previously "nationalist" policies regarding education and the expansion of Islamic institutions, such as mosques, universities and madrassas.¹⁶⁴ Beginning in 1994, Shaimiev's administration built Tatar schools, an Academy of Sciences, and a Tatar University.¹⁶⁵ Tatar officials "borrowed" the sentiment of nationalist rhetoric, but removed the extreme language. For example, Tatar official would never use the words "independence" or "secession" in public.¹⁶⁶

"Tatarization" was the general policy of the republic's government to promote Tatar dominance in all aspects of society, economy and politics. Officially, these policies were an essential part of nation-building, and an effort to raise the sophistication of Tatar culture equal to that of the Russian residents of Tatarstan.¹⁶⁷ Tatar dominance was vital for Shaimiev, because it allowed him to keep Russians from gaining a foothold in his administration and appease the Tatar population, who although they may not be members of nationalist organizations, are sensitive to any trend of "Russification."

In authoritarian Tatarstan, voices that cannot be co-opted, appeased or made irrelevant in public opinion are silenced through authoritarian means. The government

¹⁶³ Yemelianova, *Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects*, 46.

¹⁶⁴ Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey*, 34.

¹⁶⁵ Roysi, *Russian Centre and Periphery: Explaining the Political Autonomy of Tatarstan*, 87.

¹⁶⁶ Zverev, *Qualified Sovereignty: The Tatarstan Model for Resolving Conflicting Loyalties*, 127.

¹⁶⁷ Yemelianova, *Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects*, 49.

manipulated the registration process for groups to undermine their ability to operate. In the heyday of Shaimiev's support for nationalists, *Ittifaq*, the *Milli Mejlis* and ATPC were given very nice offices in the center of Kazan. Years later, they were forced to leave these locations, as a way of undermining their ability to conduct business. The government, claiming it was acting in the interest of stability, denied registration for political organizations whose platforms were pro-independence. Without registration, these groups and their activities were illegal.¹⁶⁸

Fauziya Bairamova, whose one-time popularity is demonstrated by her title, "Tatar Woman of the Year, 1990", had her organization's office closed by the republic's authorities in 1996. The same year, her group's newspaper, *Golden Horde* was shut down.¹⁶⁹ According to the authorities, the newspaper was banned because it did not comply with a technicality of the federal law on the press: *Golden Horde* published in Tatar and Russian, even though it was registered as a Tatar-language newspaper. The actual reason was most likely the publication's opposition to the Tatar government.¹⁷⁰ The government has also closed the *Kazanskii Telegraph*, *Suverenitet*, and *Kris* newspapers. Closing *Ittifaq's* newspaper, *Golden Horde*, dealt a severe blow to the nationalists who relied on this newspaper as their main media outlet and was a unifier for the multiple organizations. Tatarstan Parliamentary Deputy F. Saifullin charges that Shaimiev's government has tried to depoliticize the media in Tatarstan, leading to degradation of information in the republic so that it now is only "Tatar village folklore", dancing,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 46

¹⁶⁹ Ponarin, *The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan*, 13.

¹⁷⁰ Zolotov, *Keeping Islam in Line*.

singing, festivals, gardening, etc.¹⁷¹ The elimination of all ideological content makes the control of public political opinion much easier.

ISLAMIC RADICALISM

While nationalists pose the greatest challenge for Shaimiev's authoritarianism, Islamic radicals have tried to gain public support in Tatarstan. These groups have been unsuccessful thus far, but some scholars and officials predict that radical Islamic movements will grow in the future. Sergei Kirienko, former presidential envoy to the Volga Federal District, said that there was a need to pre-empt radical Islam by strengthening traditional sects in the Volga. He was concerned that Russian Muslims might return from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries, trained in spreading radical ideologies.¹⁷² Whether or not these fears are founded, Shaimiev's control of the republic is considered very useful to the Russian authorities because of the reduction in radical Islamic activity. The Russian government has been concerned about its predominately Muslim regions becoming recruiting grounds or safe havens for terrorists, but Shaimiev has thus far kept the influence and presence of radical Islamic groups to a minimum in Tatarstan.

The few incidents reported in the republic include a plot the government claims to have thwarted, which would have attacked Kazan on New Year's Eve 2000. The most prominent incident was the explosion of a gas pipeline near Kukmor in December 1999.¹⁷³ The men accused of the crime were students of the Yolduz Medressah in Naberezhnie Chelny, a hotbed of anti-Russian sentiment. They explained their motives

¹⁷¹ Yemelianova, *Shaimiev's 'Khanate' on the Volga and its Russian Subjects*, 46.

¹⁷² Gordon M. Hahn, *Russia's Islamic Threat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

¹⁷³ Ponarin, *The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan*, 17.

as, "Dagestanis from Karamakhi asked us to help [our] Islamic brothers fighting in Chechnya. They said that if we blew up the gas pipeline, the Western public would take notice of the war."¹⁷⁴ The authorities investigated multiple claims of extremism in Naberezhniye Chelny and closed a *madrassa* in the city because it taught religious extremism.¹⁷⁵

The regime takes a very strong stance on Islamic radicalism. Anyone considered a radical Islamist is arrested by the government, and it is not clear if they are criminally tried, jailed or killed. In 2004 and 2005, members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami party (the Party of Islamic Liberation) were arrested. Russian human rights groups charged that some of the charges were falsified and the suspects were tortured.¹⁷⁶ This harsh position is not hidden by the Tatar government. Shaimiev, speaking at a republic Security Council meeting, said that the government could drive a bulldozer over the radical *madrassa* in Naberezhniye Chelny, to wipe it off the face of the earth, but that this would not solve the problem, since the radicals would simply go underground.¹⁷⁷ Such harsh rhetoric is indicative of the lengths the regime is willing to go to ensure that Tatarstan is seen as a republic that is not host to Islamic radicalism. Rafael Khakimov, policy adviser and "spin doctor" for Shaimiev, was quite open to the foreign media about the government's method of dealing with Islamic radicalism. "We had some Wahhabis here in Tatarstan, but we don't have them now. It may not have been very democratic but we just got rid of

¹⁷⁴ Yuri Vasilyev, "Tatarstan, Moscow's Next can of Worms?" *Moscow News* (21-27 February, 2001).

¹⁷⁵ Heiko Schrader, Nikolai Skvortsov and Boris Winer, *The Islamic and Turkic Factors in Identity Formation Processes and Discourses on Separatism* (Madeburg, Germany: Otto-von-Guericke Universitat Madeburg, [2003]).

¹⁷⁶ Ponarin, *The Potential of Radical Islam in Tatarstan*, 17.

¹⁷⁷ Vera Postnova, "Wahhabis Under Shaimiyev's Nose," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* September 22, 2004.

them."¹⁷⁸ This hard-line position is designed to protect Shaimiev's power and gain favor with the federal authorities.

Shaimiev and his regime work hard to promote an image of Tatarstan as a place on the cutting edge of cooperation and peace. Tatarstan is promoted as a mediator between Moscow and restive regions, and internationally, as an example of resolving territorial and secessionist disputes. However, Tatarstan is a true authoritarian republic, and it is obvious. "I think the regime does not feel very confident, and even minor criticism generates strong displeasure...The authoritarian regime has never ended here," said Damir Iskhakov, a Tatar ethnologist at Institute of History in Kazan.¹⁷⁹ This authoritarianism is an essential component of how the process by which Tatarstan achieved more sovereignty than other republics. By controlling dissent within his territory, Shaimiev can act convincingly as popular ethnic leader, and can offer the federal government a tranquil, stable Tatarstan.

Through regional authoritarianism, the Shaimiev government maintained stability by controlling electoral procedures, government institutions, media and opposition groups. This allowed Tatarstan and Russia to come to an agreement which granted Tatarstan an unprecedented level of autonomy. Control over the population of his republic and the ability to incite anti-Kremlin sentiment were tools used by Shaimiev to make his leadership valuable to the Russian government. Stability ensured by Shaimiev during a period where many regions threatened separatism, was of great benefit to the Russian leaders, who in turn worked with Shaimiev to keep him in power and agree to Tatar autonomy.

¹⁷⁸ Seamus Martin, "Farewell to Liberal Innocence, make Way for the Extremists," *The Irish Times*. September 18, 1999.

¹⁷⁹ Zolotov, *Keeping Islam in Line*.

CHAPTER 4

ASYMMETRIC AUTONOMY IN RUSSIA'S REPUBLICS

Autonomy is difficult to define, and even more difficult to measure, yet scholars agree that Tatarstan enjoys an unprecedented level of autonomy within the Russian Federation. The republic retained the majority of control over tax revenues, retaining approximately 50% more than other republics. Tatarstan also had some control over the use of its considerable natural resources and had the legal ability to establish foreign economic relations. Even in the language used in its power-sharing treaty, Tatarstan is the only republic described as a "state unified with the Russian Federation."¹⁸⁰ This thesis has shown that Tatarstan negotiated this high level of autonomy through a combination of authoritarian control and taking advantage of elite networks. (this is trust?)

The twenty-one other ethnic republics of the Russian Federation are ideal for testing this hypothesis. These republics have similar histories: they were forced into the Russian or Soviet empires, administered as ASSR's of the Soviet Union, and struggled to find their place in the chaotic post-Communist transition. The similar historic background and commonality of all being homelands of ethnic minority groups eliminates the necessity to consider history and minority status as causes. The Soviet structure of regions' units was continued after the establishment of the Russian Federation. The three distinct levels of federal subjects, in descending autonomy, were republics, followed by

¹⁸⁰ Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 7, 11, 16.

krais, oblasts and significant cities, then autonomous okrugs and oblasts, with 89 federal subjects in all.



Figure 5. Republics of the Russian Federation¹⁸¹

The relationship between the center and periphery was established by the 1992 Federative Agreement and the 1993 Russian Constitution. Tatarstan and Chechnya refused to sign the 1992 Agreement therefore they had some legality to claim that they were not bound by the Russian Constitution. The other 19 republics signed the 1992 agreement, but some of these did not want to be bound by the terms enumerated within

¹⁸¹ Jessica Griffith Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?* (Leicester, England: Department of Geography, University of Leicester, [2004]).

these documents. The 1993 Russian Constitution (which modified the 1992 document), made all the federal subjects legally equal, turning Russia's asymmetric federalism into a symmetric one. This symmetry was short-lived, as the next year, beginning with Tatarstan, the regions began to sign bilateral treaties with Russia.¹⁸²

Any region that had the same level of autonomy as the 1993 Russian Constitution was given jointly held control over the republic's natural resources and the ability to decide on their form of governance, including constitutions, but they were definitively not sovereign entities.¹⁸³ Regions could increase their autonomy by negotiating a bilateral treaty with the federal authorities, and about half the republics eventually signed bilateral treaties with Russia, allowing them rights in addition to the basic rights of all republics. The federal structure has continued to develop through agreements and court rulings, but these bilateral treaties are the most substantial and binding amendments to the 1992 Agreement and the 1993 Russian Constitution.

From the beginning, the Russian Constitution was vague enough to allow interpretation and inconsistent treatment of the regions by the center. For example, the provision allowing the establishment of the republic's choice of governmental system is not completely clear. Bashkortostan and Russia signed an annex to clarify that the republic could establish an independent legislature.¹⁸⁴ Adygeya, on the other hand, had to fight a legal battle with the federal government to retain its bicameral legislature, while several other republics had similar bicameral bodies and were not being pursued.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Stig Kjeldsen, "Treaty Process Evolves: The Russian Bilateral Power-Sharing Treaties," *Review of Central and East European Law* (1998), 364.

¹⁸³ Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 5.

¹⁸⁴ "Russian Constitution, Annotated," *Review of Central and East European Law* (2002-3), 287.

¹⁸⁵ "Adygeya Election Challenges Stand to Enforce Federal Law," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*. March 19, 2001.

The numerous addenda agreements, treaties, etc. resulted in a very asymmetrical federal system that had succeeded in providing the flexibility needed to stabilize the diversity of regional characters, interests and needs. This asymmetry resulted, however in the complication of jealousy between regional leaders over the differences between the privileges allowed. For example, some treaties and agreements signed by the republics with Moscow outlined percentages of natural resources that they controlled or the proportion of federal tax revenues that remained in the republic. Republics could very easily see another treaty as unfair. For this reason, many later bilateral agreements were secret.¹⁸⁶ The process of federalism is dynamic and ongoing, as has been seen in Russia, with some observers viewing federalism as a process rather than a system, a constantly changing relationship between the center and periphery.¹⁸⁷

This chapter will analyze the remaining factors that are often considered to cause asymmetry in levels of autonomy. The factors that play a major role in the federal-republic autonomy negotiation are economic potential, presence of natural resources, external borders, and the concentration of the titular nationality. P.J. Soderlund isolates these same factors as influences on the bargaining process, referring to them as territory (borders), strength of ethnicity (population), and economic strength (natural resources). Soderlund's study is focused on the presence of these resource "bargaining chips" in correspondence to how quickly a bilateral treaty was signed. Soderlund's study, which includes all the treaties signed with Russian regional governments, (not only republics), shows the combination of factors that would best facilitate a quick negotiation process. This assessment that the first treaties were the most liberal is an astute and compelling

¹⁸⁶ Peter J. Soderlund, "The Significance of Structural Power Resources in the Russian Bilateral Treaty Process 1994-1998," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36 (2003), 316.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 312

assessment, but overall, Soderlund misses the mark on the important question of the mechanisms at work in the republics, focusing instead on a more superficial survey of regional characteristics. The factors that Soderlund has identified do play a role in the bargaining process, but not directly. These factors guide the incentives of regional and federal elites in a specific direction regarding each republic. This chapter will show how these factors alone do not affect the outcome of the autonomy negotiations.¹⁸⁸

Each characteristic, borders, population and natural resources, will be analyzed by comparing ethnic republics of the Russian Federation, in an effort to demonstrate why each factor cannot explain the republics' diverse levels of autonomy. This process will show that trust between elites and authoritarianism within the republics resulted in the highest levels of autonomy among Russia's ethnic republics. If the dynamic of trust and authoritarianism leads to a high level of autonomy, then one would expect to see those republics lacking one or both of these factors to have achieved a lower level of autonomy. Similarly, other republics whose political dynamics included trust and authoritarianism will have achieved a level of autonomy closest to Tatarstan's.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

Table 1. Level of Autonomy¹⁸⁹

Republic Name	Bilateral Treaty	Autonomy
Bashkortostan	August 3, 1994	High
Sakha	June 29, 1995	High
Tatarstan	February 15, 1994	High
Buryatia	July 11, 1995	Moderate
Chuvashia	May 27, 1996	Moderate
Kabardino-Balkaria	July 1, 1994	Moderate
Komi	March 20, 1996	Moderate
Mari El	May 20, 1998	Moderate
North Ossetia	March 23, 1995	Moderate
Udmurtia	October 17, 1995	Moderate
Adygeya	No	Low
Altai	No	Low
Chechnya	No	Low
Dagestan	No	Low
Ingushetia	No	Low
Kalmykia	No	Low
Karachay-Cherkessia	No	Low
Karelia	No	Low
Khakassia	No	Low
Mordovia	No	Low
Tuva	No	Low

For the purposes of this study, autonomy will be assessed by the amount of areas of governance over which the republic has control, and the relative importance of these areas. For example, a republic's ability to conduct foreign economic relations leads to a greater degree of autonomy than the ability to put the titular nationality on passports. Attention will also be paid to the legal wording of the agreement with Russia, though with the understanding that de jure and de facto do not always coincide in the Russian Federation.

All the Federation republics, except Tatarstan and Chechnya, signed the federal treaty in 1992, this agreement was a starting point for autonomy. It stated the rights that

¹⁸⁹ Soderlund, *The Significance of Structural Power Resources in the Russian Bilateral Treaty Process 1994-1998*, 317.

were reserved to the republics, but in order to exercise them, the republics would have to act in accordance with federal law and jurisdictional conflicts would be settled by the federal Constitutional Court. The treaty was vague about the republics' rights regarding the use of natural resources. Republics were granted the right to engage in external trade and relations.¹⁹⁰ In general, these rights did not satisfy the republics, and some republics, like Tatarstan, negotiated bilateral treaties that enhanced their rights and thereby expanded autonomy.

Autonomy, or the freedom to choose one's own actions, will be defined as high, moderate or low, based on the de jure concessions of rights that the republics won from the Russian Federation, and when it is different from their de jure rights, the republic's de facto rights. The twenty-one republics are categorized according to their level of autonomy relative to the others. A bilateral treaty is a main indicator of high autonomy, but the exact level also depends on the rights exercised by the republic, primarily, control over tax revenues, natural resources, the ability to engage in foreign economic relations, and control over state institutions in their territory. Soderlund evaluates the success of republics (and all regional administrative divisions) at using their resources in the bargaining process with the Russian center. He evaluates their success based on how early they were able to sign a bilateral treaty with the Russian Federation, assuming that the earliest treaties yielded more rights to the republics, an assumption also supported by Filippov and Shvetsova.¹⁹¹ While this is true to some extent, it is certainly not a hard and fast rule, primarily because within the republics who signed bilateral treaties, there were

¹⁹⁰ Daniel R. Kempton, "The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): The Evolution of Centre-Periphery Relations in the Russian Federation," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 4 (June 1996).

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 312, 316. M. Filippov and O. Shvetsova, "Asymmetric Bilateral Bargaining in the New Russian Federation. A Path-Dependence Explanation," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 32, no. 1 (1999).

great disparities in autonomy level, and timing has proven to not be a reliable indicator of autonomy. For example, Sakha, one of the most autonomous republics, signed its bilateral treaty nearly a year after Kabardino-Balkaria, which won far fewer concessions.

Evaluating the de jure and de facto levels of autonomy in the republics is a challenge. The dynamic nature of the relationship between Russia's center and regions is constantly changing, and not very well reported (this is sometimes done by design). The time frame over which the negotiation process took place complicates the selection of a time period to compare; indeed, some republics consider their treaty negotiations ongoing. In order to make this analysis as accurate as possible, evaluations of autonomy are centered on the time when the majority of the republics signed treaties, 1994-1998. Additionally, the assumption is that a bilateral treaty granted a republic more autonomy than it would have had without one, since basic rights were enumerated in the 1992 Federative Agreement and the 1993 Russian Constitution.

Republics categorized as having high autonomy have control over vital aspects of their economies as well and enjoy additional rights relating to other jurisdictional areas. Not all republics that signed bilateral treaties have high levels of autonomy, but the three republics that enjoy this freedom, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and Sakha, all signed bilateral treaties.

The Republic of Sakha has a high level of autonomy including broad control over its budget and diamond resources, military service of its citizens, and is able to retain revenue from local taxes.¹⁹² The ability to keep the republic's tax revenue in the republic is a unique provision in Sakha's bilateral treaty. The federal government agreed to let

¹⁹² N. J. Lynn and P. Fryer, "National-Territorial Change in the Republics of the Russian North," *Political Geography* 17, no. 5 (1998). Donna Bahry, "Ethnicity and Equality in Post-Communist Economic Transition: Evidence from Russia's Republics," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 5 (2002).

Sakha's government use the amount that would normally be sent to Moscow in the republic to support the federal facilities and institutions there.¹⁹³ This arrangement benefitted the republic greatly because, as one of the wealthiest republics, it was able to have better federal services in the republic. The relationship between the federal center and Sakha is evident in the language used to describe the republic, as "a state conforming to the Constitution of the Russian Federation," a strong statement in support of Sakha's autonomy and its status as a "state" that has chosen to enter the federation willingly.¹⁹⁴

Bashkortostan's bilateral treaty is perhaps the closest to Tatarstan's, and contains similar tax-exemptions to Tatarstan and Sakha,¹⁹⁵ significant control over Bashkortostan's budget, and the right to establish republican national banks. Regarding non-fiscal matters, Bashkortostan secured the right to decide whether to participate in military actions, to select its own prosecutorial and judicial personnel.¹⁹⁶

Those republics evaluated to have moderate autonomy have additional autonomy than the amount described in the 1992 Federative Agreement and the 1993 Russian Constitution, all of them achieving this status through a bilateral treaty. The difference between a moderate level of autonomy or a high level of autonomy is that they do not have the broad or complete control over natural resources, federal tax revenue or republic budgets. A moderate level of autonomy typically is characterized by the ability to control their republic's system of governance and to conduct foreign economic relations. These

¹⁹³ Kempton, *The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): The Evolution of Centre-Periphery Relations in the Russian Federation*.

¹⁹⁴ James Hughes, "Russia's Regions: Moscow's Bilateral Treaties Add to Confusion," *Transition* 2, no. 19 (September 20, 1996).

¹⁹⁵ Henry E. Hale, *The Regionalization of Autocracy in Russia*. (Cambridge: Harvard University, [1998]).

¹⁹⁶ Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 11, 13.

republics are: Kabardino-Balkaria, Komi, Buryatia, Chuvashia, Mari El, North Ossetia, and Udmurtia.

The republican leadership in Kabardino-Balkaria signed a bilateral treaty in many ways similar to Tatarstan's,¹⁹⁷ and was able to get concessions from Moscow so that Kabardino-Balkaria now enjoys the status of "Tax-free Zone", which has encouraged foreign investment and developed the economy.¹⁹⁸ These concessions allow them considerably more ability to deal with foreign countries than other republics, particularly those which did not sign a bilateral treaty. Like Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, Kabardino-Balkaria asserted autonomy regarding military issues, not abiding by the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) sanctions of Abkhazia in 1996.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the republic is categorized as having moderate autonomy because its powers are significantly less than the aforementioned republics with high autonomy levels. Kabardino-Balkaria did not win the same far-reaching tax-benefits as these republics, and Constitutional Court rulings have struck down republican policies on population movement, unlike rulings pertaining to Sakha.²⁰⁰ Even the legal language of their bilateral treaties, shows the moderate level of autonomy achieved by Kabardino-Balkaria, which is described as "a state within the Russian Federation," implying that Kabardino-Balkaria is a subordinate unit of the Federation.²⁰¹

The wording of the Komi bilateral treaty clearly indicates its moderate level of autonomy. The description of Komi implies the subordinate position of the republic, "a

¹⁹⁷ Elizabeth Teague, "Federalization a La Carte."

¹⁹⁸ Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 24, Robert Orttung, Danielle N. Lussier and Anna Paretskaya, *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 164.

¹⁹⁹ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, 4th ed. (London: Europa Publications, 2004), 380.

²⁰⁰ "Rights and Freedoms of Man and Citizen," (2002-3), 347.

²⁰¹ Hughes, *Russia's Regions: Moscow's Bilateral Treaties Add to Confusion*.

region of the Russian Federation." By contrast, Tatarstan is referred to as "a state united with the Russian Federation."²⁰² Komi was unable to gain the rights that Sakha and Tatarstan did regarding tax revenues and republic budgets, but it is able to have foreign economic relations, which it does with more than 40 foreign countries.²⁰³ Like Bashkortostan, Komi has in its bilateral treaty the specific provision, that it can establish institutions of self-governance, but only according to Russian Federal law.²⁰⁴ This still gives the right to establish self-governance, which was not as firm for those republics without a bilateral treaty. The Constitutional Court, as in Kabardino-Balkaria, did not allow Komi to systematically favor the titular nationality. An election commission had refused to register a candidate in elections for the Komi state council because it did not have a permanent registration, but this action was struck down and the court ruled that the electoral law only requires the candidate to have residency, (different from registration and in some cases easier to obtain).²⁰⁵ In 1997 and 1998, the Russian Constitutional Court tried to overturn republican laws on local government in both Komi and Udmurtia. In the 1998 incident, the Komi government asserted that local forms of government were the jurisdiction of his republican government. The year before, the leadership of Udmurtia refused to obey this same ruling, making similar jurisdictional objections. Ultimately, however, Udmurtian government was forced to accept the ruling.

Chuvashia enjoys a level of autonomy similar to that of Kabardino-Balkaria and Komi, due to sanctioned corporate tax incentives and the ability to have trade relations

²⁰² Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 7.

²⁰³ Ross, *Federalism and Democratisation in Russia*, 141.

²⁰⁴ *Russian Constitution, Annotated*, 289.

²⁰⁵ *Russian Constitution, Annotated*.

with over 60 foreign countries.²⁰⁶ Another similarity is the way the republic's autonomy has been curtailed by the Constitutional Court, especially regarding Chuvashia's electoral laws.²⁰⁷

Buryatia does not have as many economic advantages as Komi and Kabardino-Balkaria, but was able to achieve the right to declare a state of emergency.²⁰⁸ Buryatia for an abnormal number of years resisted the federal government requiring changes to their Constitution, such as the provision that presidential candidates know both Russian and the republic's native Buryat.²⁰⁹

Republics categorized as having "low" autonomy have not signed a bilateral treaty, which means that by law, they have only the autonomy described in the 1992 and 1993 documents. These republics can exercise similar rights to those in the "moderate" category, but those with low autonomy only exercise these rights with the permission of the federal government. Some of these republics seem to act with impunity, exerting a moderate level of autonomy over such issues as system of governance and republican budgets, but these tend to be the smallest republics, and their autonomous actions are ignored by Moscow, because they have so little bearing on the Federation. Still, any autonomous actions these republics can "get away with" are de facto, and attempts to codify this autonomy (through local legislation, interference with federal tax revenue or agreements with foreign entities) usually elicits a response from federal authorities. Republics with these characteristics and "low" autonomy include Kalmykia, Mordovia, and Khakassia.

²⁰⁶ Orttung, Lussier and Paretskaya, *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders*, 102.

²⁰⁷ *Russian Constitution, Annotated*, 283.

²⁰⁸ Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 13.

²⁰⁹ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, 373.

Other republics find that the Russian government is very involved in local politics, which is most likely motivated by the Russian government's incentive to keep all the republics as close to the Kremlin as possible, politically. An easy way to do this is for Russian interests to be injected into government, which is also a simple way for the federal center to monitor the stability of the regions. This was the case in Adygeya, as well as Altai Republic and Karelia.

Some republics with low autonomy had very different experiences during the negotiation periods. These republics were so embroiled in territorial and ethnic conflict that they did not engage as much in negotiation with the federal government as with themselves. These republics are all located in the Caucasus, and have at times relied on the stability of the Russian government to keep their republics together, very opposite from pushing for autonomy. These republics are: Ingushetia, Dagestan and Karachay-Cherkessia. Finally, Tuva and Chechnya were embroiled in conflict also, but as a result of their own separatist desires. Since they are still in the Russian federation, it is clear that they did not achieve a high level of autonomy, and in fact, both have low autonomy, which allows the federal government to better maintain control.

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, President of Kalmykia since 1993, is perhaps the most irrational and interesting politician in Russia today, a chess fanatic who openly admires dictators and believes that he was abducted by extraterrestrials. He has, according to many observers, squandered the finances of his small republic by building a "Chess City" complex, which is barely inhabited and luxurious in one of the poorest Russian republics. Kalmykia has a low level of autonomy, having not signed a bilateral treaty, and because the federal government has few interests in this region, the regime is essentially left

alone. Kalmykia has a higher level of de facto autonomy than most other republics categorized as having "low" levels of autonomy, but the Kalmyk president does not distance himself from Kremlin policies, he mimics them. In fact, in March 1994, less than a year after being elected, Ilyumzhinov abolished the Kalmykian Constitution and decreed that only the basic Russian law would rule. The Constitution was replaced later, but Kalmykia lost most of its autonomy because it did not have any of its own laws.²¹⁰ If autonomy is defined as the ability control one's actions, then without a constitution, a government cannot set a course different from the rest of the federation.

In general, Ilyumzhinov sought the favor of the federal leadership, and in the 1990's he supported the integrity of the Russian Federation, bucking the trend of sovereignty demands. In 1993 he renounced the republic's sovereignty, which was declared years earlier.²¹¹ Despite the Kalmykian regime's accepting attitude toward Russian policy and law, when the President opposed Russian interests he was quickly reigned in. In 1998, Ilyumzhinov went on Russian Public television and declared that Kalmykia was "de facto, outside of the Russian Federation." He was condemned by the Duma and because of fears that he would be removed from office, withdrew his statement.²¹² The Kalmykian situation varies greatly from most other republics in the way that the republic supported the unity of the federation, but enjoyed a degree of autonomy in the way it was generally ignored by the Russian authorities. Mordovia and Khakassia,

²¹⁰ Ibid., 380

²¹¹ Ibid., 179

²¹² Ibid., 180

also small republics, were largely ignored by the federal authorities, and like Kalmykia, rarely opposed the policies of Moscow.²¹³

As opposed to the quiet republics, who were more often ignored by the Russia authorities, several republics found themselves constantly the object of actions by federal authorities which minimized their autonomy. Adygeya has a low level of autonomy compared to other republics because of the amount of control the Kremlin exerts over local politics. Compared to other ethnic republics, federal law violations in Adygeya's Constitution and bilateral treaty have been more vigorously pursued than those of other republics. The federal government did not let Adygeya have a bicameral parliament even though ones existed in at least four other republics.²¹⁴ Most clearly demonstrating the low level of autonomy in Adygeya is the fact that the republican government's most serious concern is the potential that they will be forcibly merged with the Krasnodar Region, thereby losing all autonomy.²¹⁵

Similarly, the Altai Republic has low autonomy and more federal intrusion into republican affairs than in other republics. The Constitutional Court has ruled several times on the structure of the Altai republican government, including a ruling that republican officials could not appoint to the federal agencies located in their territory, a right that other republics, such as Bashkortostan, did enjoy. Overall, there have been a unusually high number of rulings in the Russian Constitutional Court regarding the Altai Republic.²¹⁶

²¹³ Vladimir Shlapentokh, *From Submission to Rebellion: The Provinces Versus the Center in Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 95.

²¹⁴ *Adtgeya Election Challenges Stand to Enforce Federal Law*.

²¹⁵ Hasan Kanbolat and Suat Kiniklioglu, "The Adygeya Republic: A Litmus Test of Russian Federalism?" *CACI Analyst* (May 8, 2002, 2002)., Oleg Tsvetkov, "Adygeya: Friends in High Places," *Transitions Online* (July 16, 2007).

²¹⁶ *Russian Constitution, Annotated*, 282, 288, 289, 291.

Several of the republics with the lowest levels of autonomy struggled with ethnic conflict through the years, when other republics were negotiating autonomy agreements with Moscow. These republics, including Dagestan, Ingushetia and Karachay-Cherkessia are all located in the Caucasus, and during the negotiation period and after, had low autonomy levels because they relied on the Russian government to help reduce conflict and increase stability.

Ingushetia was war-torn from 1992-1994 so its status and borders was undetermined until later than most other republics. The republic has been an "offshore economic zone", since 1994, enabling Russian companies to register there and avoid taxes, but this potential indicator of autonomy was done only with Russian permission.²¹⁷ Dagestan is not trying to get as much autonomy as it can from the federal government; it is more concerned about subsidies, which it could not survive without.²¹⁸ Karachay-Cherkessia was struggling to keep its republic unified between opposing Karachay and Cherkessian ethnic groups, and feared igniting ethnic violence throughout the Caucasus.

These three republics suffered through violent years while others negotiated for autonomy. Tuva and Chechnya also experienced violence, but it was typically in lieu of negotiations for autonomy. Tuva and Chechnya were the only republics to, during the key negotiation period, have their Chair of Parliament and President, respectively, be the leaders of nationalist organizations.²¹⁹ There were clashes between Russians and Tuvans in 1990 and sporadic inter-ethnic violence, but not to the level seen in Chechnya. Tuva originally passed a constitution that negated the Russian constitution's privatization of

²¹⁷ Patrick E. Tyler, "In Caucasus, the Peaceful Separatists," *The New York Times* 2 February, 2002.

²¹⁸ Orttung, Lussier and Paretskaya, *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders*, 112.

²¹⁹ Daniel S. Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order," *World Politics* 49, no. 2 (January 1997), 242.

land, gave the republic the right to override a federal declaration of a state of emergency, the right to appoint their own prosecutors and judges, and to deny any military appointments in the republic.²²⁰ The constitution also had within it the right to secede from the Russian Federation in the case of "an emergency situation or a political and state crisis in the Russian Federation."²²¹ The Congress of Tuva was eventually forced to amend these differences in order to bring the republic's Constitution in line with the Russian Constitution. The original Tuvan constitution granted the republic the right to self-determination and secession from the Russian Federation, and was edited only after a rancorous negotiation. In other republics, constitutional debates yielded measurable successes for the republic, but the Tuvan constitutional debate was solved by granting the republic's politicians the right "to express their attitudes towards the decisions of the federal bodies of power and the bodies of state power of the constituent parts of the Russian Federation on the question of war and peace in conflict situations, threatening the life and security of citizens."²²²

Chechnya is a case that is different from the other republics regarding autonomy negotiations because it is still considered by some, to be negotiating a power-sharing treaty with Moscow. For the purposes of this analysis, it is considered a state with a low level of autonomy, as it does not legally have the same rights as most other republics. As of 2007, the negotiations of a bilateral treaty were stalled over the issue of which federal

²²⁰ Steven L. Solnick, "Federal Bargaining in Russia," *East European Constitutional Review* 52, no. 4 (1995), 53.

²²¹ Yelena Tregubova, "Nationalities Ministry Conducts Review of Regional Constitutions," *Sevodnya* (21 October 1994, 1994).

²²² "Chronology for Tuvians in Russia," Minorities at Risk Project, UNHCR, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/chronology.asp?groupId=36537> (accessed 14 May 2009).

level will control the use of natural resources, and Chechnya's desire to be a "special economic zone" to attract investment.²²³

Table 2. Economic Potential/Natural Resources²²⁴

Republic Name	National Rank	National Resources	Overall Economic Potential	Level of Autonomy
Bashkortostan	22 (High)	60.9% (High)	High	High
Sakha (Yakutia)	1 (High)	85.0% (High)	High	High
Tatarstan	21 (High)	56.2% (High)	High	High
Buryatia	31 (Moderate)	29.5% (Moderate)	Moderate	Moderate
Chuvashia	72 (Low)	12.1% (Low)	Low	Moderate
Kabardino-Balkaria	74 (Low)	11.5% (Low)	Low	Moderate
Komi	35 (Moderate)	84.4% (High)	High	Moderate
Mari El	55 (Moderate)	19.9% (Low)	Moderate	Moderate
North Ossetia	63 (Low)	26.4% (Low)	Low	Moderate
Udmurtia	45 (Moderate)	38.7% (Moderate)	Moderate	Moderate
Adygeya	49 (Moderate)	26.3% (Low)	Moderate	Low
Altai	60 (Low)	27.3% (Low)	Low	Low
Chechnya	No Data	No Data	No Data	Low
Dagestan	78 (Low)	30.4% (Moderate)	Low	Low
Ingushetia	No Data	66.1% (High)	N/A	Low
Kalmykia	76 (Low)	45.1% (Moderate)	Low	Low
Karachay-Cherkessia	75 (Low)	36.5% (Moderate)	Low	Low
Karelia	13 (High)	66.8% (High)	High	Low
Khakassia	4 (High)	59.5% (High)	High	Low
Mordovia	73 (Low)	13.2% (Low)	Low	Low
Tuva	65 (Low)	46.5% (Moderate)	Moderate	Low

A republic's economic potential, frequently measured by the amount of natural resources found within its territory, is frequently analyzed as a major factor in the level of autonomy achieved by Russian Federation republics. Proponents of this hypothesis state those republics richer in natural resources or with strong economies are less reliant on the

²²³ "Russia Offers Chechnya Special Status," *BBC News*. 1 August 1998.

²²⁴ Bert Van Selm, "Economic Performance in Russia's Regions," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 4 (June 1998), 612-613. Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 8.

Russian government, and they use their resources as bargaining tools when negotiating with the federal government.²²⁵ However, a republic may be rich in natural resources but landlocked and unable to sell or process their resources without the cooperation of the federal government, weakening their ability to use the resources as a bargaining chip.

Bert Van Selm analyzed the economic performance of the 89 regions using Goskomstat data from 1995 to score and rank each region based on the leading economic indicators of unemployment, income, and industrial production. The republics are categorized according to where they fall in this range: ranks 1-29 are categorized as "high", ranks 30-59 are "moderate" and ranks 60-89 are "low." The amount of natural resources is also important to economic potential and some theories of autonomy negotiation. In this analysis natural resources are measured by resource industries as a percentage of industrial production in 2001²²⁶. The republics are ranked by thirds, 0-29% are considered "low" natural resources republics, 30-55% "moderate", and 56-85% "high." When the economic rank and amount of natural resources indicated different levels of economic potential, the place within each range was considered to determine an overall rating of "high", "moderate" or "low." Some data was unavailable because of the conflicts in Ingushetia and Chechnya during the 1990's.

Table 2 demonstrates how economic potential and autonomy do not correspond to one another. Although the three republics with the highest autonomy levels also have high economic potential, two republics with low autonomy, Karelia and Khakassia, have high economic potential. Among the republics with moderate autonomy, there are a variety of economic potential levels, with one "high" potential republic, three "moderate"

²²⁵ Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 8.

²²⁶ Ibid.

level republics, and three "low" potential republics. Economic potential or natural resources alone did not lead to the levels of autonomy achieved by the Russian republics.

Table 3. External Borders²²⁷

Republic Name	Borders	Federal District	Level of Autonomy
Bashkortostan	Internal	Volga	High
Sakha (Yakutia)	External	Far Eastern	High
Tatarstan	Internal	Volga	High
Buryatia	External	Siberian	Moderate
Chuvashia	Internal	Volga	Moderate
Kabardino-Balkaria	External	Southern	Moderate
Komi	Internal	North Western	Moderate
Mari El	Internal	Volga	Moderate
North Ossetia	External	Southern	Moderate
Udmurtia	Internal	Volga	Moderate
Adygeya	Internal	Southern	Low
Altai	External	Siberian	Low
Chechnya	External	Southern	Low
Dagestan	External	Southern	Low
Ingushetia	External	Southern	Low
Kalmykia	External	Southern	Low
Karachay-Cherkessia	External	Southern	Low
Karelia	External	North Western	Low
Khakassia	Internal	Siberian	Low
Mordovia	Internal	Volga	Low
Tuva	External	Siberian	Low

²²⁷ Ibid.

Table 4. Concentration of Titular Nationality²²⁸

Republic Name	Concentration of Titular Nationality in Republic*	Level of Autonomy
Bashkortostan	Low (21.9%)	High
Sakha (Yakutia)	Low (33.4%)	High
Tatarstan	Moderate (48.5%)	High
Buryatia	Low (24.0%)	Moderate
Chuvashia	High (67.8%)	Moderate
Kabardino-Balkaria	Moderate (57.6%)	Moderate
Komi	Low (22.1%)	Moderate
Mari El	Moderate (43.3%)	Moderate
North Ossetia	Moderate (53.0%)	Moderate
Udmurtia	Low (30.9%)	Moderate
Adygeya	Low (22.1%)	Low
Altai	Low (31.0%)	Low
Chechnya	High (66.0%)	Low
Dagestan	High (76.7%)	Low
Ingushetia	High (74.5%)	Low
Kalmykia	Moderate (45.4%)	Low
Karachay-Cherkessia	Moderate (40.9%)	Low
Karelia	Low (10.1%)	Low
Khakassia	Low (11.1%)	Low
Mordovia	Low (32.5%)	Low
Tuva	High (64.3%)	Low

*based on 1989 census

An alternative explanation of the varying levels of autonomy between ethnic republics is the idea of legitimacy. This hypothesis posits that if a republic was less likely to be able to survive as an independent state, then Russia would not take its demands seriously. The less legitimate state (as defined by Toft) would therefore have less autonomy, since the incentive for Russia to make concessions would be low. In Toft's²²⁹ explanation of this hypothesis, a republic with little legitimacy has a non-violent negotiation with the federal center, while a republic with greater legitimacy expects a higher degree of autonomy (often independence) and the negotiations devolve to

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory*.

violence. An ethnic region that is considered to have legitimacy as an independent state generally must have external borders and a large concentration of the titular nationality residing in its territory.

Based on an analysis of these characteristics, it is apparent that "legitimacy" had little effect on the level of autonomy of the Russian republics. One might expect that as a republic's concentration of its titular nationality increased, autonomy would increase as well. By this same reasoning, an external border would increase the level of autonomy. Tatarstan and Sakha have similarly high levels of autonomy, and in both the republics the titular nationality was not a majority. In Tuva, for instance, there is an external border and a convincing majority population of Tuvans, but the republic has achieved less autonomy than Sakha or Tatarstan.

The analysis of titular nationality population considers is categorized as such: $\text{Low} \leq 40\%$, $40\% \geq \text{Moderate} \leq 60\%$, $\text{High} \geq 60\%$. Using these categories, it is demonstrated that the concentration of a titular nationality within a republic does not correspond to autonomy. Among the half (approximate) of the republics with the highest levels of autonomy, "high" or "moderate", 40% are the majority ethnic group in their region. Among the republics with "low" levels of autonomy, 45% are the majority ethnic group in the republic. These percentages being nearly equal, it can be assumed that population of the titular nationality alone did not lead to the level of autonomy achieved. Since demographics, economic potential, and borders alone do not correspond to autonomy levels, then a combination of factors is likely to be more explanatory.

Table 5. Trust and Authoritarianism

Republic Name	Trust	Authoritarianism	Level of Autonomy
Bashkortostan	Yes	Yes	High
Sakha (Yakutia)	Yes	Yes	High
Tatarstan	Yes	Yes	High
Buryatia	Weakly Yes	Yes	Moderate
Chuvashia	Yes	No	Moderate
Kabardino-Balkaria	Yes	Yes	Moderate
Komi	Yes	Weakly Yes	Moderate
Mari El	Yes	Yes	Moderate
North Ossetia	Yes	No	Moderate
Udmurtia	No	Weakly Yes	Moderate
Adygeya	No	Yes	Low
Altai	No	No	Low
Chechnya	No	Yes	Low
Dagestan	Yes	No	Low
Ingushetia	No	Yes	Low
Kalmykia	No	Yes	Low
Karachay-Cherkessia	No	Yes	Low
Karelia	No	No	Low
Khakassia	No	No	Low
Mordovia	No	Yes	Low
Tuva	No	Yes	Low

This chapter has demonstrated that the level of autonomy achieved in Russia's twenty-one republics during the Post-Soviet period was not determined by economic potential, natural resources, region, and concentration of titular nationality or having external borders. That these important factors were not correlated with the level of autonomy indicates that a different mechanism leads to autonomy level. As explained in the earlier chapters of this thesis, the dynamics of trust and authoritarianism in Tatarstan resulted in a high level of autonomy. Analyzed across the other twenty republics, trust and authoritarianism, when present, lead to a higher level of autonomy than without. Among the republics with high levels of autonomy, all have strong authoritarian leaders during the negotiation period whose relationship with the federal leaders is characterized

by a high degree of mutual trust. In this way, the leaders on both sides can reduce their risk and have incentives to make the negotiation as amicable as possible.

Tatarstan, Sakha and Bashkortostan all achieved high autonomy through their bilateral treaties, and all had strong elements of trust between regional and federal elites, and regional authoritarianism. Tatarstan and Bashkortostan are very similar as far as leadership and regime type. Bashkortostan's authoritarian leader, Murtaza Rakhimov, was the previous Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Bashkortostan prior to 1991, tightly controlled the republic's media and opposition groups, had close ties to Moscow elites and was well-known to President Yeltsin, with whom Rakhimov enjoyed a good relationship.²³⁰

When comparing the leadership of Sakha before and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the continuity is clear. Within Sakha, widespread ethnic discrimination against Russians, who are the majority in the republic, resulted in an overrepresentation of Yakuts. In the early 1990's, more than half of the 27 members of government were of Yakut ethnicity. At the same time, of the 335 regional and district administrators, 80% were Yakut or members of a non-Russian, native ethnic group. Approximately half of the members of government were former apparatchiks and the Sakha elite were open to bargaining with the federal elite.²³¹

Trust and a friendly relationship between Sakha and Moscow improved greatly with Yeltsin's decree in 1994 denouncing the Stalin-era persecution of the Yakuts. At the same time, Yeltsin made good on his promise of increased sovereignty, and allowed

²³⁰ Claire Bigg, "Bashkortostan: Opposition Denounces 'Dictatorship' at Moscow Protest," *RFE/RL Newsline*. 8 April 2005.

²³¹ McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty*, 48-50.

Sakha more control over its vast natural resources.²³² Nikolayev and Yeltsin were said to have a close personal friendship. Of additional assistance was Nikolayev's friendship with Pavel Borodin who worked for Yeltsin and was in charge of the federal property holdings. This relationship undoubtedly assisted Nikolayev in securing the unprecedented republican control over natural resources.²³³ His personality was said to have contributed to his trusting relations with Moscow. Nikolayev made a positive impression with the Moscow elites, where he tended to voice support against reforms.²³⁴

During his tenure Nikolayev gained personal political control in the republic, and became one of the more influential republic leaders. He was called an "economic authoritarian" because he backed state regulation of the economy, arguing that it creates an atmosphere stimulating to growth and entrepreneurship. Diamonds allowed the Sakha government a great deal of leverage over regional and national politics, yet they did not benefit the Sakha population.²³⁵ The residents of Sakha are among the poorest in the Russian federation, even though the government regularly deals with foreign companies interested in purchasing the republic's lucrative natural resources. The government also controls the electoral process, which has been manipulated to keep the Russian population from increasing their representation in Sakha politics and to break term limits for the executive.²³⁶

²³² Ibid., 48

²³³ *EastWest Institute Russian Regional Report* 7, no. 10 (13 March 2002).

²³⁴ McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty*, 48.

²³⁵ Ibid., 48

²³⁶ Prendergrast, *There are Republics and then there are Republics: Who Matters?*, 24, "Assessment for Yakut in Russia," Minorities at Risk Project, UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/refworld/docid/469f3acac.html>, "Sakha President Relies on Moscow and Diamonds to Secure Re-Election," NUPI Centre for Russian Studies, <http://www2.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/krono.exe?353>

Republics characterized by moderate levels of autonomy generally have degrees of trust and authoritarianism, but they are weaker than those present in the highly autonomous republics.

Kabardino-Balkaria has a moderate level of autonomy due to trust and authoritarianism that, was generally weaker than in Tatarstan, Sakha and Bashkortostan. The republic's elites were constant through the post-soviet transition, adding to the level of trust between regional and federal leaders.²³⁷ Longtime President, Valerii Kokov, was the leader since before the fall of the Soviet Union, having served as Chairman of the republic's Supreme Soviet.²³⁸ He ran unopposed in 1996 and was elected to his 3rd term in 2002 with 87% of the votes.²³⁹ He was authoritarian, but primarily through election fraud,²⁴⁰ and thus the regime overall was less controlling than other republics.

Mari El is similar to Kabardino-Balkaria, in the fact that it also had elite trust with Moscow and an authoritarian President. The power-sharing treaty was signed in 1998 under the regime of authoritarian leader Vyacheslav Aleksandovich Kislitsyn. He was accused of the misuse of the republic's funds, appointing officials who had criminal records, and limiting freedoms within the republic.²⁴¹ Kislitsyn formerly served in the Russian Federation Council in 1993-1997, so he was a Moscow insider, having attended graduate school in the capital as well. He joined the Our Home is Russia Party in 1997 in order to garner more favor with Yeltsin.²⁴² Kislitsyn's insider status paid off in the form of the regime generally being left alone by the federal government. In 1999 this fact was

²³⁷ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, 380.

²³⁸ Liz Fuller, "Kabardino-Balkaria: President's Premature Resignation Highlights Republic's Problems," *RFE/RL Newsline* 19 September 2005.

²³⁹ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, 380.

²⁴⁰ Hahn, *Russia's Islamic Threat*, 146.

²⁴¹ *EastWest Institute Russian Regional Report* 5, no. 45 (6 December 2000).

²⁴² Orttung, Lussier and Paretskaya, *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders*, 326.

obvious, when Kislitsyn tried to sell Russian missile defense system classified technology to the Kuwaiti government, and was not prosecuted.²⁴³

Komi's moderate level of autonomy is characterized by trust between the regional and federal elites, and weak authoritarianism. The republic could be characterized as semi-authoritarian because the government lacked a true separation of powers, but had real competition for leadership. At the fall of the Soviet Union, Yurii Spiridonov, a Russian, chaired the Komi Supreme Soviet, and Vyacheslav Khudyaev, of Komi ethnicity, chaired the Council of Ministers.²⁴⁴ They remained in power through the immediate transition and in 1993 split over the Russian Constitution. Spiridonov was ultimately elected. During his tenure, the continuity of power was very prevalent due to his experience in the Soviet system and the 30% of city or district administrators who were elected to the republican legislature. This continuity increased trust, and the authoritarian character of the regime was encouraged by the non-existent separation of powers.²⁴⁵

Buryatia is somewhat similar to Komi, as both republics have degrees of trust and authoritarianism, but one is weaker than the other. Leonid Potapov, former Chairman of the Supreme Soviet became the first president and led an authoritarian regime. He restricted freedom of the media, manipulated elections, and strong-armed his legislature.²⁴⁶ Potapov claimed that his relationship with Moscow was good, but observers have characterized it as nothing extraordinary.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Ibid., 326

²⁴⁴ *EastWest Institute Russian Regional Report* 6, no. 34 (3 October 2001).

²⁴⁵ Ross, *Federalism and Democratisation in Russia*, 48.

²⁴⁶ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, 373.

²⁴⁷ Orttung, Lussier and Paretskaya, *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders*, 65.

Chuvashia and North Ossetia are very similar to one another, both having trust and no authoritarianism in their republics during the negotiation period. North Ossetia's leader, Akhsarbeck Galazov had a good relationship with Moscow²⁴⁸ and was not authoritarian. Nikolai Fedorov of Chuvashia, worked under Yeltsin as a justice minister in the early 1990's, but broke with him over the decision to use force against parliament in 1993.²⁴⁹ This shows that there was trust, since they did have an actual personal relationship at one time, which is arguably more advantageous than to have no relationship at all. Fedorov was not an authoritarian leader, as evinced by the republic's 1997 competitive elections. In this 1997 race, Fedorov won with 56.5% over his opponent, who garnered 35% of the vote.²⁵⁰

Udmurtia was different from most republics, because it did not have trust and was a weak authoritarian regime. In 1996 the parliament was accused of suffocating the local government to the point that it was declared illegal, though in general it was not considered very authoritarian.²⁵¹ As of 1999 the republic had not voted to create the position of President. Therefore, prior to his election, as the republic's first president, Alexander Volkov served as Chairman of the Republic's council. Yeltsin and he did not have a strong relationship and in fact in 1997, Yeltsin threatened to dismiss Volkov.²⁵²

The republics found to have low levels of autonomy are generally lacking in either trust, authoritarianism, or both. Of the republics characterized by low autonomy, Karelia, the Altai Republic and Khakassia have neither elite trust nor regional authoritarianism. Dagestan is characterized by a trusting relationship with Moscow but is

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 375

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 103

²⁵⁰ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia.*

²⁵¹ Ibid., 390

²⁵² "Kremlin Seeking to Bridle Big Cities, Says Russian Paper," *Kommersant*. 20 April 2001.

not a very liberal regime. By far, most of the republics which have a low level of autonomy are authoritarian but do not have the trust of the federal leadership. These republics include Kalmykia, Ingushetia, Mordovia, Adygeya, Karachay-Cherkessia, Tuva and Chechnya.

Viktor Stepanov, the President of Karelia, was outspoken in favor of decentralization of the Russian Federation, which ran counter to the interests of the Kremlin, whose incentive was to keep the regional governments as under control as possible. This demonstrates that there was low trust, since Stepanov made himself such an outspoken critic of a highly centralized federation. In May 1998, incumbent Stepanov lost reelection, a clear sign that Karelia was not an authoritarian regime, which tends to enable incumbents to win elections (because they are rarely free or fair).²⁵³ Despite the competitive elections, the upper chamber of the legislature was created specifically for the district and city administrators to serve in, recycling the government personnel in such a way that it reduced the ability of the branches to check one another.²⁵⁴

Similarly, in the Altai Republic, elite continuity through the post-Soviet transition was strong, and the leaders remained closely tied with the Russian government. The government was not authoritarian because the leaders had competitive elections, electing a new president nearly every four years. Turnover in the executive contributed to the low level of trust between the republican and federal elites.²⁵⁵

The Republic of Dagestan, in the 1990's, had a trusting relationship with federal elites. The government tried an experiment to represent each ethnic group in the legislature, not like the authoritarianism in other republics. An unintended consequence

²⁵³ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, 382.

²⁵⁴ Ross, *Federalism and Democratisation in Russia*, 48.

²⁵⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newswire, various articles.

was that as of 1999 there was actually no position of President of the Republic, although referenda were held three times, in 1991, 1993 and 1999. Ethnic tensions led the voters to fear putting power into the hands of a single executive.²⁵⁶ Magomedali Magomedovich Magomedov, longtime leader of Dagestan, was the Chairman of the republican state council and served as the executive leader, since there was no president, from before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin called Magomedov on the eve of his 1998 election to express support, which indicates that there was trust between the leaders. This trust was pragmatic, because Russia needed an ally in the war-torn Caucasus and Dagestan needed the support of the Russian state in order to remain stable.²⁵⁷

Most of the republics had authoritarian regimes but lacked a trusting relationship with the leadership of the Russian Federation, preventing them from successfully negotiating; a consequence that is very pronounced for those republics with low autonomy levels.

In Kalmykia, the republic's government was highly authoritarian, but encouraged no trust from the federal government. In general, the Kalmykian President's authoritarianism was by using the population to support his whims. For example, in 1998, the regime needed to furnish empty houses in his "Chess City" for an inaugural tournament. The impoverished residents were told to lend their kitchenware, refrigerators and televisions for the duration of the competition.²⁵⁸ Regarding the republic's media, an opposition paper, *Sovietskaya Kalmykia* existed but was printed with such great secrecy

²⁵⁶ Orttung, Lussier and Paretskaya, *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders*, 111.

²⁵⁷ "No Surprises in Dagestani Election," NUPI Centre for Russian Studies, <http://www2.nupi.no/cgi-win/Russland/krono.exe?2379> (accessed 14 May 2009).

²⁵⁸ Seth Mydans, "Where Chess is King and the People are the Pawns," *The New York Times*. 20 June 2004.

that the press was located in a neighboring republic.²⁵⁹ President Ilyumzhinov has said that he personally relates to and admires dictatorial leaders, describing himself as a combination of Napoleon, Lenin, de Gaulle and Marx.²⁶⁰ Under these conditions, no trust could develop with the federal elites because of Ilyumzhinov's unprecedented irrationality. The 1994 abolition of the republic's own constitution demonstrated this irrationality very clearly, in addition to Ilyumzhinov's claims about extraterrestrials and aspirations for his republic to be the Chess capital of the world.²⁶¹ A bargaining partner as irrational and erratic as the Kalmukian President could not be trusted to keep to his word. Furthermore, he took actions that were contrary to his own requests for autonomy. On one hand, Ilyumzhinov asserted legal supremacy of republican law over federal law, then changed positions completely, not just declaring federal legal supremacy over his republic, but abolishing his entire constitution. When Ilyumzhinov did this, it was clear that the President was unstable and nothing he said or did could be trusted. This is the most extreme case of authoritarianism in the Russian federation, but the general theme of a Soviet-era dictator is common in the republics.

The Adygeyan republic's leadership was generally the same group of people from the Soviet government through the transition to the Russian Federation. The first President was Aslan Aliyevich Dzhariyev, former Secretary of Krasnodar Region Party Committee, who became Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Adygeya, in 1989 and was elected President of the Republic in January 1992. Trust between the regional and federal elites was not strong, as evidenced by the federal government's interference in Adygeya

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Malik Grossekathofer, "Kalmykian Leader Makes Farce of Chess Championships," *Spiegel Online*, 12 October 2006.

²⁶¹ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, 380.

affairs. The Adygey do not have a high level of trust for the federal elites because of this interference, and the threat to dissolve the republic into Krasnodar is an ever-present possibility. The government of Adygeya does exert some aspects of authoritarian control, but the strong Russian presence means that there is a large opposition which enjoys national support and makes it difficult for the Adygeyan administration to enforce its will without public support.²⁶²

The first president of Karachay-Cherkessia, Vladimir Khubiyev, was the republic's former Communist party leader who took over as executive of the republic in the early 1990's. At this time the republic was so unstable that the federal government could not trust that Kubiyeu would be able to uphold his end of any agreements that were made. Observers assessed that he would only remain in control as long as he prevented violence.²⁶³ Under these conditions, the republic was authoritarian, but was unable to develop trust with the federal government in order to negotiate for autonomy.²⁶⁴

Mordovian President Nikolai Merkushkin was authoritarian, and was accused of manipulating election laws to win reelection in 1998 with 96.6% of the votes. He achieved this, allegedly, through the legislature disqualifying all his viable opponents.²⁶⁵ There was not much trust between Merkushkin and federal elites, as he was not a former apparatchik like most of the regional executives.

Ruslan Aushev, president of Ingushetia during most of the 1990's infuriated Moscow by criticizing the war in Chechnya and resulted in a low level of trust, so low

²⁶² *Russia Offers Chechnya Special Status*, Kanbolat and Kiniklioglu, *The Adygeya Republic: A Litmus Test of Russian Federalism?*

²⁶³ "Regions and Territories: Karachay-Cherkessia," BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/5381570.stm 14 May, 2009).

²⁶⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines, various articles.

²⁶⁵ *Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, 385.

that he was even thrown out of the capital itself.²⁶⁶ Aushev's regime was authoritarian, and tried to institute *sharia* (Islamic law), and successfully manipulated election laws.²⁶⁷

In Tuva, President Sherig-ool Oorzhak, was a former apparatchik and authoritarian leader.²⁶⁸ However, his authoritarian control was not enough to overcome the nationalist movement enough to avoid violence and encourage trust between the republican and federal elites. A fact that exacerbated this was that Tuva's Chair of Parliament was the head of a nationalist organization.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, Tuva was incorporated into the USSR in 1944, so compared to other republics, Tuvan elites had much less time to develop contacts and networks in Moscow.²⁷⁰

Chechnya, under Dzhokhar Dudaev, was clearly an authoritarian leader without a trusting relationship with the Russian leadership. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a personal dislike prevented President Yeltsin and Dudaev from negotiations over a bilateral treaty, even in periods of relative calm.²⁷¹ The Chechen government is not generally referred to as "authoritarian," but regardless of the terminology used, the regime in Chechnya has for decades controlled all aspects of life in the republic. For the purposes of assessing this trust-authoritarianism hypothesis, Chechnya during the past two decades of instability, has all the characteristics present to be considered an authoritarian republic.

As seen in Table 4, when a republic's government has a trusting relationship with the federal elites, it is able to engage in negotiations with the advantage of a crony

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 378

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 378. Tyler, *In Caucasus, the Peaceful Separatists*.

²⁶⁸ *EastWest Institute Russian Regional Report* 8, no. 2 (3 February 2003).

²⁶⁹ Treisman, *Russia's "Ethnic Revival": The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order*, 242.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 243

²⁷¹ Hughes, *Russia's Regions: Moscow's Bilateral Treaties Add to Confusion*.

relationship with the federal elites. However, if that republic's government does not also have control over the media, political institutions and freedom of speech in its republic, then it will not have the stability bargaining chip. In 1994-1998 period of transition and autonomy negotiation under President Yeltsin, the Kremlin placed a premium on stability. A republican leader who could ensure stability (from ethnic nationalism, primarily), could convince Moscow to give up much more in terms of the republic's autonomy. Similarly, a republican leadership with authoritarian control over opposition within its borders but who could not be trusted to adhere to the terms of an agreement would also not be able to get much by way of autonomy concessions from Moscow. This analysis has demonstrated among the republics of the Russian Federation, trust between regional and federal elites, coupled with authoritarian control within the regions, is a determinant of the amount of autonomy that a republic can achieve within the Russian Federation.

CONCLUSION

TRUSTING AUTOCRATS?

Tatarstan, a semi-autonomous republic of the Russian Federation, is regularly cited as an example of a peaceful resolution to a potentially violent ethnic separatist situation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic groups such as Tatars and Chechens began to demand independence. Out of this cacophony of autonomy demands, Tatarstan emerged with perhaps the highest level of autonomy of Russia's 21 ethnic republics. Oft-cited explanations of this result include the nature of the Tatar people and the geography or natural resources of Tatarstan. While these are important factors in understanding the process by which autonomy was achieved, the reality of post-Soviet politics must be considered. This thesis argues that Tatarstan negotiated a relatively high amount of independence through elite trust and regional authoritarianism. Leaders at the republic and federal level had a relationship that can be characterized as trusting: being able to rely on the other's adherence to agreements, non-adversarial behavior, predictability and competency. The unique position of the Tatar leadership allowed them to maximize their autonomy by being seen as an ally of Moscow, having insider experience with the Russian legal system, and by using President Shaimiev's authoritarianism as a bargaining chip. The control exercised by Shaimiev's regime over Tatarstan was a tool used by the republic's leadership to apply pressure to the federal authorities during a period when Moscow feared the unraveling of the fragile Russian

Federation. Authoritarianism under Shaimiev featured repression of nationalist dissent and control of political institutions at all levels of government. Elite trust and regional authoritarianism acted upon each other to keep the balance of incentives for both Tatarstan and Russia. As an authoritarian regime, the Tatar government wanted to remain in power and manipulated opposition groups to demonstrate its ability to keep order in the region. The Russian government, wanting calm in its ethnic regions, valued the stability of the Shaimiev regime, which it perceived as more reasonable than other ethnic regions, due to shared values and experiences. In this way, trust and authoritarianism, were integral to the level of autonomy that Tatarstan achieved in the post-Soviet autonomy negotiations.

THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA'S ETHNIC REPUBLICS

One could argue that authoritarian control through unstable times is a natural and helpful stage in a transition from a centralized, controlled system such as the Soviet System to a free and open democracy. Authoritarian control provides stability and enables the government to make the necessary changes, such as the transition from a centrally-planned to market economy, without the hassle of democratic processes. It is certainly true that Russia's transition since 1991 has been characterized by authoritarian practices, much of which may be due to the persistence of Soviet-era leadership. These leaders maintain their connections and result in a government that is not transparent, is not welcoming to outsiders, and is not equitable. Still, the government has tended to be stable. As described in this thesis, the stability precipitated by the elite trust and regional authoritarianism combination is based on personalities. In the case of Tatarstan, the

stability and prosperity of the republic is largely due to the influence of Mintimer Shaimiev. Unfortunately, this type of stability is bound to come to an end, and this begs the question, what happens when these former Soviet leaders are no longer in power?

Shaimiev is a member of an illustrious "class" of former Soviet apparatchiks who are currently presiding over many of the Russian republics and the former Soviet States. This "class roster" includes such names as Nursultan Nazarbayev, and Islam Karimov, the current Presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, respectively. Their class is only a decade from reaching retirement and soon the next generation will take the reins. For policy and the study of political transitions, it will be a significant event when the "Shaimievs" leave their Kremlins and parliament buildings for the sunny shores of the Crimean or Lake Baikal.

For a glance into the future, one can look into the past. Unfortunately, the members of Shaimiev's "class" who have already left office also left behind a mixed bag of stability and instability in their wake. For example, Kyrgyz President Askara Akayev was forced out of office after years of increasingly heavy authoritarianism. This "Tulip Revolution" could potentially be repeated across Russia in the many authoritarian ethnic republics. On the other hand, there is the uneventful transition that took place in Turkmenistan with the death of Turkmenbashi, one of the most authoritarian leaders in the "class." Analysts were concerned that a power vacuum caused by the retirement or death of Turkmenbashi would result in a revolution, but the transition was the opposite.

It is most likely that as the members of Shaimiev's "class" leave office, that there will be a mixture of peaceful and turbulent transitions. This change will then usher in a new "class" of leaders. This group will not have such strong "apparatchik bonds", and

this new group of leaders will probably test the strength of Russian federal asymmetry.

With any luck, they will forge a new, equitable and stable model of autonomy.

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